

TAGORE AND EHRU

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A STUDY IN CONTRAST

BY

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"UTTARAYAN"
SANTINIKETAN, BENGAL

Let them desert thee
who are thine own,
be not dismayed.
The tree of thy hope may wither
and the fruit lost,
be not dismayed.
Even if overtaken by dark night
in the middle of thy path
walk on.
Even if thou failest in thine efforts
to light the lamp
be not dismayed.
Never go baffled in despair
if gates are shut against thee;
and if they refuse to yield to thy knocks,
be not dismayed

Feb. 10 1940

Rabindranath Tagore

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I.

FAMILY ANTECEDENTS

Talent may be inherited in some cases but genius is the result of supreme efforts on the part of the individual himself. This is the commonly held belief. Whether Pavlov students or followers of J. B. S. Haldane or other such scientists would reject or confirm this assumption is a matter which those interested in the science of genetics might pursue with some advantage to themselves. But to those unfamiliar with the intricate theories of this science, it seems that not only talent is inherited sometimes by some ' individuals ' but also other family antecedents, including the temperament of the members of the family, influence these 'some individuals'. *Litterateurs* like Lenin, Wells and Shaw might entirely cast off their family influences, and turn out literature for the most part stamped with their own individuality; but not so Nehru and Tagore. In their case the influence of the family is quite marked; and so far as Nehru is concerned, the inherited family habits and temperamental characteristics could be discerned in him even now when he is in prime of his life.

What are these family characteristics which sometimes distinguish Nehru from Tagore, and at others give the two men the appearance of similarity ? How far have these very charac-

teristics influenced their life work ?

The Bengal Poet came of a zemindar family. His father was one of those enlightened Bengal landlords (with interests centred in cities too) who have been made familiar to us by such writers as Bankim Chatterjee and the Poet Tagore himself (some of the characters in his novels bear keen resemblance to the members of his family and might be described as 'family pen-portraits'). The unlettered know such characters through the medium of the films.

However, here the analogy ends. The Poet's father did not spoil his child, as admittedly many Bengal landlords do their children by allowing them to become political or spiritual vagabonds. Noguchi once called Tagore 'a spiritual vagabond'. That was an unkind cut. Perhaps, sometimes, Tagore does sojourn in the mystical world, leaving his readers in a baffled state, and wondering, whether the Poet was not indulging in vague similes or metaphors. However, if one were to view the spiritual ideas of the Poet in the background of his peasant-proprietor-class culture and remember that many a Bengalee youth of his means fondered on the rock of Hindu asceticism and took to the jungles or the wilderness of the religious preaching; then it would seem (to men less prejudiced than Noguchi) that poetry (even occasionally vague) balanced the spiritual ideas of Rabindranath, and from the very beginning he eschewed the company of the *sadhus* and such 'spiritual vagabonds'. True he never formed any definite ideas about what Noguchi was pleased to call spiritualism. But

it is not to be wondered at. Tagore was primarily a poet, a lover of the beauty of Nature, like William Wordsworth or Shelley. His spiritual or mystical excursions are natural in his family and class background, and often excusable, for, art like other substances contains useful as well as the useless matter. One should treat Tagore's spiritual talks as mere effuvia of a well-meaning poet of Nature who could not always rise above the general outlook of society in his province and in his family (and perhaps in his country too). If he is not much worse, and he certainly belied the epithet of Noguchi, we have in part to thank his father for it, who was of course responsible for the education of his son.

To avoid his son getting entangled in spiritual nonsense and the abominable cult of the Indian saints, his father gave him the secular education of the Brahma Samaj which, whatever one might think of its claims to be a sort of a Catholic party in Indian religious movement of the day, had at its head a very enlightened and liberal statesman, Rammohan Roy, who had travelled abroad, and knew a thing or two about liberalism as well as Cobden, Bright, Parnell, Bradlaugh and other foremost liberals of his time.

Brahma Samaj liberalism formed the background of the ideas of Devendranath Tagore. The younger man, even then essentially a poet, did not swallow with equanimity all that was imparted to him by way of secular education. He did not like it and indeed there was not

much to like in the orthodoxy of the time.

The revolt in him took the form of hymns of Nature and hymns about country-wide poverty.

It is characteristic of his father that he did not prevent his son from indulging in such activities; and though he might have wished him to become a stalwart pillar of his own secular cult, he tolerated his son's ideas. For this toleration the posterity has to thank his father, and not for any secular education that he gave him and which did the Poet precious little good. There was only one hall-mark of this secular education given to Rabindranath, and that was that the boy began (not wrongly) to respect the liberal political ideas of Rammohan Roy, eschewing the religious nonsense of that leader.

Such trend in this young man of acute poetic and political sensibilities was a good omen; and it stood out in glaring contrast with the peurile politics of many a young man of his time.

The broad bases of a *front paysan* or common front with the peasants were laid, and later on we find the Poet preaching ideas which to us of the later day seem little different from the established concepts of the popular front.

The young kulak had crossed over the divide, and joined the popular forces in the struggle against black reaction in Bengal and elsewhere. This boy was then free from spiritual or political vagaries of his time.

What were the love affairs of Rabindranath? The British people banned any discussions about

the love affairs of Victoria, their queen, for quite a long time. It is well known that the American films portraying her life were not exhibited in England till the popular forces made an end of this kind of muzzling of press activity and suppressing of the human urge for curiosity. Now we know that Queen Victoria had love affairs with Disræli, Peel, and many more, just as Elizabeth or Catherine of Russia had.

In India, a moral censorship prevails about the love affairs of the great men. The sooner it is lifted the better. In some cases we might expect to be shocked, in others midly amused, and in some cases we might be annoyed. What would a chronicler of the private life of the young Poet enfold? For the present we can skip over this aspect of his life and compare what we have discussed about his secular education (or abortive secular education) and political education with similar or identical trends in Nehru when he was of the same age.

The 'shadow' secular education in the case of Nehru was the theosophical teachings imparted to him. His father appointed a theosophist as his teacher. Was it a reactionary move or a belated effort like that of Devendranath to foist a particular religious cult on his son? And was it successful?

Motilal Nehru was not a theosophist though he was considerably attracted by many of the familiar credos of this cult and was a great friend of theosophist leaders such as Annie Besant, etc. He wanted that his son while learning the sciences and the arts should also have

a smattering of this philosophy. In any case he did not want to foist this cult on him and indeed we find that younger Nehru was never much of a theosophist.

Love of poetry was also inculcated in the son by his father—elder Nehru—who had read prodigiously the English, Persian, as well as the tribal poetry of India usually called Urdu poetry. He was also familiar with Persian poetry written by Indian *litterateurs* who in their hunt for a foreign language as the medium of expression never looked beyond the banks of the Tigris. The result was that these people turned out poetry which for its bad language continues to remain an object of amusement to the world. Nehru junior devoured this kind of poetry too just as he did Walter de la Mare, Shelley and others whom he quotes prodigiously and with literary precision that well might win the praise of Archibald Macleish or Desmond MacCarthy. He was of course not a writer of poetry like Tagore, but the Poet of Bengal has not quoted as many foreign poets in his writings as Nehru has done.

Did younger Nehru's poetic leanings or his small-scale theosophical education provide the basis for his liberalism and socialism just as similar trends in Tagore did? Here we should leave this discussion about the philosophical and poetic trends of the two boys and for a while probe the class basis of the Nehru family just as we have analysed the class outlook of the Tagores. If the Tagores were of peasant-proprietor family and the early education of the younger

Tagore was originally planned by his father according to the ideas then current in his class; the Nehrus belonged to the city *bourgeoisie*. Living in this city *bourgoeis* circles where the ritual mark on the forehead and burning of the incense at home was considered of greater importance than the displaying of the political emblem, Nehru the younger at first eschewed the company of the underdog. He did not fraternise with the city workers as Tagore did nor with the peasants, for the simple reason that such city workers were scarce then and indeed the growth of the proletariat was an event of the later-day epoch. But if Tagore due to his peculiar peasant surroundings felt the urge of socialism earlier than Nehru, the liberal nationalist (this phrase frequently used by a professor of a Lahore college, the late Gulshan Rai, should not be confused with a typically narrow Hinduistic philosophy which that gentleman propounded. What he meant from liberal nationalism was of course Hindu Sabha liberal nationalist standpoint; something very remote from Kunzru's liberal nationalism or that propounded by Rammohan Roy) urge in the two boys was similar. By a remarkable coincidence both the Brahma Samaj as well as the theosophical cult have in part helped the growth of a healthy liberal nationalist standpoint in the country. The theosophist leader Annie Besant was a liberal, when Nehru was cramming theosophical teachings. She grew up to be a greater radical than Rammohan and a practical politician too; which the latter could never be, being too much

enmeshed in the religious revivalist movements of his time. Looking back in this year of grace the liberal nationalist leanings of the boy Tagore or of Nehru seem trivial; for both have blossomed out into full-fledged radicals and patriots. But it was no small matter then, and what is important for posterity, Nehru's political and philosophical trends at that time proved a steel wall against the vagaries of the youth of the city *bourgeoisie* of the United Provinces. As in Bengal so in U.P. spiritualism as well as nationalism were then in rage among the *bourgeoisie*, and many a youth without having the advantages of the family antecedents which Tagore and Nehru had fondered on the rocks or sang "Ah! Wilderness." Like Devendranath Tagore it did not take long for Motilal to discover that his son having grown tired of philosophical liberalism was going the whole-hog radical way. And like the Bengalee kulak he did not prevent him from taking that path nor for that matter did he later show any aversion towards his socialist programme though no doubt in the beginning there was no end of row at home on this subject. In the end the wishes of the younger man prevailed. The same was the case in the Tagore family. There Tagore's wishes prevailed. The love life of Jawaharlal Nehru is also unknown and though he relates the event of his marriage ceremony in his autobiography, he does not tell us all the events of which the climax was that particular event. We know him as a good brother, son, husband and a politician of whom India

might deservedly be proud; but we know nothing about the romantic temperament (or otherwise) of the lover of poetry in different languages.

When at last the moral censorship in this country of ours is lifted in case of the love life of Tagore, who is by far more respected of the two sons of India, then perhaps we might know more about the other great man, who has so discreetly avoided taking up this subject in his world-famed and world-known autobiography. In the case of Nehru, it was perhaps due to the fact that he was just then in bereavement. But now in his case as in that of Tagore, we can leave this subject to some Indian Philip Guedella or Robert Graves.

What else did these two men—Devendranath Tagore and Motilal Nehru—the heads of two distinguished families in Bengal and U.P. pass on to their sons by way of their cultural or intellectual heritage?

The two men did not stand in the way of the younger men continuing their philosophical or political excursions and also, which is important, they did not insist on their making a contribution to the family which could prevent a sliding scale income—a factor which, though not common in Nehru and Tagore families because of the immense stored up wealth, had all the same to be kept in view. For some time the expenses of the two families were heavy, and only the legal practice of elder Nehru could maintain an even scale between income and expenditure while in case of

Devendranath's family, the finances were just in a tolerable condition in the elder Tagore's lifetime. After his death, it deteriorated, so that the younger Tagore had to sell some of the land. Later, however, money poured in with increasing rapidity.

But the elder stalwarts, conscious as they were of the dignity of their cause, could naturally in this matter exert pressure on the younger men. Would it have been desirable? What if Tagore and Nehru had as young men taken to some profession to add to the family income and maintain the kulak and the city *bourgeoisie* tradition respectively. Could they then become so well known as they have? Perhaps in the end their abilities in their particular spheres would have moulded for them the path of glory. Fame might have come to them. But in any case their parents did not insist on their making contribution to family finances.

The two men were not shirkers of work, occasionally they did contribute their mite and in some cases made some money. Later on this habit of having a private income continued and we find that Nehru made handsome money out of his books which by the way he still writes. In case of Tagore his activity was centred over writing poetry, but he earned money from painting, and from Santiniketan as well as Sriniketan. He managed his estate well and this brought about increase in his income. Though in the long run it was better that neither Tagore nor Nehru as young men tried to prop up the structure of landlordism or city *bourgeoisie* in their families

by making a financial contribution for such purposes—one wishes that in several matters with different motives—they should have devoted greater attention to certain aspects of their home affairs. For instance, young Tagore, socialist-minded as he was, could organise the work of his farm on socialist lines by mechanising the agriculture and socialising the means of production. This would have yielded greater agricultural produce, and what is equally important led to an appreciable increase in the standard of living of those engaged in the farm work. Many a young man of Tagore's means and his socialist ideas have found it difficult to translate into action their ideas of socialism ; even though it means adopting of a profession which is quite remunerative to them and by no means waste of time.

As for Nehru the younger, it seems his own property is not quite managed according to the ideals for which he has striven in his life. A landlord at Lucknow All-Parties Conference, angered over the socialist talks of younger Nehru, remarked that Anand Bhavan had not been pulled down. That was a foolish remark. Since then part of the Anand Bhavan has been given over to the Congress and it is called Swaraj Bhavan. It is a very big building and most of it remains empty. There are also plots of land and some houses near it, which are lying almost useless, except for the fact that the Congress flag still flutters over the building.

Allahabad has its own working-class problem and the workers in U.P. have like those of

Andulsia in Spain, a very low standard of living, perhaps among lowest in India and Asia. Could not greater part of this building be so fashioned as to provide residential flats for the working class? Could not it be made into something resembling the *Karl Marx and Engels Hof* in Vienna, which politician Nehru has no doubt seen and admired. The Allahabad Municipality, which is Congress-controlled, could give financial and technical aid. The local Congress Committee, the communists' organisation and Congress Socialist Party which are by the way moneyed organisations and financially well off could give help that they could. And with Nehru himself and ex-Minister of Health Vijaylaxmi guiding the scheme, wonders might be achieved in this direction. This is however one instance of the methods which a socialist could employ to set his own house in order.

If neither Nehru nor Tagore ever thought of it, it was because, as youg men, following the ancient example they left everything to their parents, and accepted with resignation whatever was done by their elders. The elders by not inviting the attention of the young men in this particularly constructive move of liberalism at home misused that doctrine. The nation was benefiting from the liberal and the patriotic efforts of Nehru the younger and literary and political writings of Tagore, but if this matter had been also attended to it could prove of greater benefit to the nation. Even now, Nehru (of course his sisters too) could break the family tradition in this matter, and the

heirs and the successors of Tagore translate into action (at home) the socialist doctrines of the late Bengal Poet.

However this is an excursion into the realm of future. For the present dealing with the family antecedents we can only remark that here was one more example which showed that in their conduct at home sometimes Nehru and Tagore bore striking resemblance to each other.

Another characteristic which the two young men inherited from their family was the love of the soil—the two loved their provinces. This is not to say that they were not internationalists. But they were busy with the problems of their respective provinces. This excessive zeal for the provincial affairs as well as international politics was a characteristic of the political outlook of Devendranath Tagore as well as Motilal Nehru. However so long as this zeal of the two young men was directed towards the broad issues facing their province, all was well. But sometimes lesser men also keen about provincial welfare succeeded in winning over their sympathy for their particular cause, and the result was that their prestige received a set-back. The examples of such conduct are Nehru's attitude towards working-class affairs in Cawnpore and elsewhere. The U.P. politician was sometimes without even scant justice bitter about the attitude of the workers and lashed out at their leaders. His attitude towards Kisan Sabha and the communists left much to be desired.

Tagore's sympathy with Bose was certainly a less objectionable feature of his provincialism but

it got him sometimes entangled in needless internal quibbles and the fact remains that neither Boșe nor Kiran Shankar Roy have been free from political errors of great magnitude. Bandying about the name of Tagore in connection with internal factional fight did bring about immense confusion in the minds of those who have always respected Tagore as a poet and politician of no mean repute.

This excessive zeal for provincialism was deepened by the fact that the two families in their social relationship rarely looked beyond the borders of the province. The matrimonial alliances were of such nature that it became a sort of tribal ritual to avoid forming of such relationship with non-Bengalees or non-Kashmiries. The fact that in some cases the Nehrus broke this tradition made little difference. The newcomers in the family were tied to the apron-string of intensely narrow Kashmiri social code. Civil marriage was not always of such nature as to invite radical change in the social code.

However in this case, one could not apportion all the blame on the two young men. Since their youth they had revolted against this system. Their writings as well as speeches and activities in the later period bore testimony to their broad-based ideas of social relationship. For the failures (in the early stages) of their families to come up to their standard in this matter, the blame should fall on all. It is doubtful, how any single or even three or four persons in a family could stage a revolt against such social customs.

All these antecedents which have been enu-

merated above betokened a degree of mental harmony between the parents and their sons (with calm disturbed sometimes by differences of opinion on social and political matters, in which matter the two parties agreed to respect the view-point of each other), which should serve as a guiding beacon to other families.

Motilal Nehru towards the end of his life treated his son as a political comrade, and consulted him as such in high matters of politics.

Similarly Poet Tagore had an identity of outlook with his father so far as his poetic philosophy was concerned. The two men exchanged notes on such subjects as the love of Nature, God as the embodiment of beauty of Nature and many more mystical allegories rather difficult to understand for the layman. These provided a basis for communion between the elder and the younger Tagore.

When making political and social pronouncements the younger man invariably consulted his father, so long as he lived. This may seem rather old-fashioned but judged in the background of the philosophical outlook of the Tagore family, this was not at all odd.

II

SOCIALIST COMRADES

Like family antecedents do not always mean that the growth in the matter of socialism should be also identical. Tagore and Nehru both had identical family antecedents, but in their devotion towards socialism they took two different paths. Of the two, Tagore was an early convert. It was in 1907 that at Pabna Political Conference he announced that he wanted to devote his time to the socialist cause. He brought forward a manifesto which purported to uplift the conditions of the peasants. There were many high-sounding phrases in the manifesto. Considered from the point of view of scientific socialism it was a very faulty manifesto. In fact it was full of idealistic philosophy. There was not much in the manifesto to promise hope to the working class, but all the same it was a new step in the political movement of the country. Nehru was at that time still a student in England. He had not yet studied socialism nor made any pronouncement in regard to the peasants or the workers. He did not follow the teachings of Tagore in this matter or for that matter of any other socialist leader of the world. All that we know from his writings lends colour to the belief that he was only a nationalist at that time and that the working-class problems did not interest

him at all. In fact in political matters at that time he was much more of a radical than Tagore. His idealism in politics took the form of extreme devotion to nationalism. It is only after the war when he returned to this country that his conversion to socialism took place. By that time Tagore had gone much ahead of his original Pabna manifesto. He had written many books including some novels depicting the working-class life in the cities. He had also portrayed the evils of the money-lending practice in India. All indication was that he had now become full-fledged socialist. It was not a question of going back to any previous programme. New times required new ideas. A socialist had to keep himself well-informed about the current events in the world around him. He had to fashion his outlook accordingly. Now what did the time require of Tagore? What was the correct path for him? We find that at that time the Revolution in Russia had finished. The civil war was going on. There was a lot of blood-shed. And there was a lot of loose thinking about the Russian Revolution. People condemned it unthinkingly. For instance both Motilal Nehru and C. R. Dass criticised the Russian Revolution. They said some very unkind words. Happily these words did not find an echo in the ideas of Tagore. He could not condemn Russia. It was against his principles. But neither could he bring forward any concrete proposals about the socialist movement in this country. He was a poet; not a politician to give a firm lead to the country. In his poetry he adopted a more

realistic tone and thought differently about the working-class problems. He frequently held up the example of Russia and praised it in his writings. In his case there was no question of his praising Russia merely because such praise was the fashion of the day. He spoke his heart out in this matter, and nobody who had heard his previous utterances could ever say that he was only pretending to be a friend of Russia.

If Tagore could not take a bold line about Russia and enunciate a practical policy for his country, did Nehru do that? We find that the U.P. leader, who was of course a new convert to socialism, did not enunciate any practical policy about Russia either. For the moment socialism became a back-number for him and he was completely engrossed in the problem of the freedom of his country. Of course he did not become a hot-head radical as of old. But he had to take a plunge in the struggle for freedom. This took him to prison. But when he was released he could look round and take interest in the socialist movement of his country. This he did. He went to the villagers not telling them in as many words that Russia had taken a step forward in the history of the world and they should follow the Russian example; but he told them that the struggle of nationalism and of the peasants was inextricably bound up with each other. And that good nationalists had to be good socialists also. That they as peasants should take interest in the freedom of the country and at the same time devote atten-

tion to their own problems. They should try to solve their problems in the socialist way, which was of course the only sane way to solve the economic problems of society. And they should try to solve their nationalist problems in the Congress way. This message of Nehru was exactly what the peasants wanted. They heard it keenly and followed it in their every-day life. There was no need to sing any poems to the peasants, and Nehru did not recite any poetry before them.

This was one example of the way Nehru tried to serve the cause of socialism. After that we find that in 1927 he went to Russia. He studied the Soviet system of government and the Russian economic system thoroughly. He gained first-hand experience of it. He met foreign socialists and communists in Brussels, Paris, Berlin, London and Moscow. He heard their opinions about the world socialist movement and the Indian nationalist and socialist movement. He told them his own impressions about his country. This exchange of views was helpful to both sides just as it was extremely timely. When Nehru returned to this country, he embodied his views about Russia in a book.

Tagore visited Russia three years afterwards. He did not meet many socialist or communist leaders outside Russia. Different motives actuated his visit to Russia. He had gone there with the heart of a poet, who also happened to be an internationalist and socialist. He did not forget the economic or political changes in Russia. He studied the Russian economic

plans. He wrote articles called *Letters from Russia*. These articles are in no way less informative than the extremely lucid and documentary book written by Nehru about the U.S.S.R. There is a good deal of information about the Soviet economic system which Tagore held up as an example for the Indian socialists to follow.

However, while Tagore only wrote this book and thus enunciated to his followers his and their course of action, Nehru spread this message to the country through the forum of the Congress. When he was elected President, he began his memorable address by referring to Russia in terms of praise. Which of the two messages had greater reception in the country and outside?

Doubtless so far as the outer world was concerned Tagore's voice was heard with greater attention for the simple reason that he was well known in foreign political and literary circles and the masses of Asia held him in great veneration. Nehru was comparatively less known. But so far as the Indian audiences were concerned, Nehru drove home the lesson of his Russian visit and paved the way for the rise of the socialist party in India and also, though the communists here do not readily recognise their debt to Nehru, served their cause too.

It should be borne in mind that communism was particularly a bugbear for the Indian official circles just then. The Meerut Conspiracy Case which was a sort of Indian Reichstag Fire Trial having just ended, these circles were

easily alarmed at any praise of the Soviet regime.

It was said that Nehru had dissociated himself from the league against imperialism and that was sufficient reason for communist anger against him. This was loose thinking and Trotskyist dogmatism. Nehru's speech at Lahore Congress should be considered a landmark in the country and for generations the parties of the left should not forget the debt which they owe Nehru for having set the ball rolling when that task was no easy matter.

Whatever we might say of his attitude towards the league against imperialism one feels that by his socialist speech at Lahore (as distinguished from his political line-up with Gandhi, which was indeed open to objection) he had more than atoned for his previous action. But even in case of Tagore, we should not underestimate the effect of his writings about Russia on the middle-class intelligentsia and the Bengal people. The Bengalees were made class-conscious by his writings about Russia. The socialists might think it somewhat amazing that a poet could by his writings make people class-conscious, especially when such writings were by no means frequent.

But this again smacks of Trotskyist dogmatism. By upholding such a statement we are likely to forget the political and economic background of Bengal. In Bengal there is a large number of peasantry which has not been satisfied with its lot since the days of Bengal settlement. These peasants were then very orthodox

and slow to move in economic matters. Provincialism was strong among them. They could easily follow the lead of an eminent Bengalee if he praised Russia but they might not treat with similar respect the sayings of the smaller left-wing leaders. One of course excludes those who were already class-conscious and formed the nucleus of the communist party.

The same is true of a large number of Bengal's city-dwellers and the middle-class people.

These people as well as the peasants had been previously lulled into slumber by the philosophy of C. R. Dass who was by no means friendly towards Russia. It required a great leader of Tagore or Bose's standing to disenchant the Bengal people in this matter and give them the true message about Russia.

What about the message of Nehru? Did the Bengal people hear it with the same respect with which they heard Tagore. In this matter, however, we should avoid comparisons. Both were socialists and respected well in Bengal. Nehru had endeared himself to the Bengal people by his forward resolutions at Calcutta (some of the political pronouncements which he made at that session, he was to disown later on) and the Bengal people saw that his economic programme was unmistakably clear and deserved to be followed. There was also a lot of confusion in Bengal about the economic doctrines of Motilal Nehru, who was by no means a socialist. He was respected much there just as C. R. Dass was. But

naturally this respect in which the Bengalees held him had its disadvantages. They were in danger of being given a wrong lead in the economic matters by Motilal just as C. R. Dass had wrongly led them. The younger Nehru by his timely intervention in Bengal affairs prevented this wrong from being done.

Whether the Swarajist Motilal ever forgave his son for meddling in areas predominantly "Swarajist" and turning them into socialist "strongholds" is another matter.

The pundits of Hindu Sabha and the landlords of Bengal were not a little alarmed by Tagore's plain speaking. But their remorse did good to nobody. That the Bengal peasants were wide awake was proved by the fact that they were beginning to form kisan sabhas and to run them on socialist lines.

But the core of socialism is planning. It was here that Nehru's genius excelled and a few years later he initiated a big scheme of vast economic rehabilitation of the country. The national planning committee was a body of experts. Nehru with his science tripos of Cambridge and immense practical knowledge of work in the scientific and economic field proved to be of immense use to the committee, just as a politician he lent great importance to that body which without a front-rank politician at its helm would have been an assembly of arm-chair academicians. Tagore was not in this group of academicians and politicians. This is important. But what could he do in this assembly.

He could only give it his moral support and

see to it that the people of Bengal lent it full support. The Bengal Government with a not too enlightened ministry at its helm might have cold-shouldered such a scheme, but could it do it and face an angry electorate carefully chaperoned by Tagore, the socialists and the communists in matter of scientific socialism and economic planning ? If Bengal had kept aloof from it, the Bengal peasant who though often a Muslim, has keen sense of his economic interests, could not tolerate it.

Outside India anxious people asked distinguished Indians travelling abroad as to what was going on in this vast sub-continent to rehabilitate the condition of the teeming millions. Tagore's literary engagements took him abroad, and whenever he spoke on Indian affairs, he was able to tell his audiences a thing or two about this huge experiment being carried on in India. Krishna Menon in England, Indian American League in America, the associations of Indians in France, South Eastern Europe, China and Japan, re-echoed what he said.

Was it more important for Tagore to sit in National Planning Assembly meetings and air his little knowlege on scientific and economic issues, or was it better to become India's messenger abroad and tell the world that the Indians reputed for indolence had shaken off the effects of the paralysis and were now abreast of many countries in the sphere of planning ?

Doubtless the latter course was more feasible and also it was in fitness with the immense poetic talents of Tagore.

Nehru himself visited foreign countries and told the people there about the education of the Indian masses in socialism and the planning of the experts to uplift their conditions. But these engagements were necessarily brief though by no means less important than those of Tagore.

In fact since he spoke to the audience of M.P.'s and politicians in England or addressed political gatherings in Caxton Hall, he enlightened those people who were particularly interested in India and who as an electorate had immense power.

While Tagore's work falls in the missionary sphere Nehru's task was mainly political. Both wanted India to be lifted high in the esteem of the foreigners. Both spoke on like topics. But they had their own way of doing it. In the foreign countries the tide had begun to turn in favour of India. In democratic China, the communists and the left-wingers demanded that Indians should be given freedom to set their own house in order. If India could plan without much power having been vested in the central or provincial governments, it could certainly set up a large-scale socialist planning machinery to cope with the immense problems of the day. In Britain internationally known scientists like A. V. Hill, Haldane, Wells and William Beveridge taking their cue from the speeches of Nehru and Tagore, among others, demanded immediate action in India. Though it must be admitted that in some cases these Britons (Hill, Wells and Beveridge) wanted the retention of the British control in large measure. Similarly in America

distinguished citizens associated themselves with the Indians' demand.

The social democratic M.P.'s in Britain are asking more questions in Parliament which reveal first-hand knowledge of Indian economic and political conditions supplied by the India League in Britain. In view of all this it seems certain that Indian link-up with the socialist international (when it is formed once again after the war on the basis of socialist-communist unity) is certain. Previously the Indian objection to such a link-up was that the socialist-international was too little interested in Indian affairs, and also that it was not a professional body but reactionary. The communist international was considered too much extremist for the large Indian nationalist bloc in Congress. The combined socialist-communist international would easily parry such objections. In fact this link-up has already taken place in the sphere of labour. The Indian labour is making common cause with the British and the American labour who for most part favour a link-up with the workers of U.S.S.R. There is a small but very noisy section of the workers in Bengal, which has trailed after the left-wing hirelings of M. N. Roy or the extremely cautious and sectarian Bengal labour party. These people may not wish to join the proposed international organisation of the socialists and the communists. They would be certainly recalcitrant and unwilling partners in a world link-up of the forces of the workers, should they at all join such an organisation.

But they would do well to remember that

Tagore, the international spokesman of the Bengal workers, was a champion of the Soviet Union and if he were alive he would favour India's participation in such an international organisation along with the progressive people of Britain, U.S.A., Soviet Russia, China, France and other countries. There is no doubt that in the long run the forces of the left in Bengal once they decide on such a course would succeed in satisfying the objections of the other labour party men there and see to it that Bengal is not left behind when the question of the international solidarity of the workers arises. In the literary sphere too the Bengalee or for that matter the Indian *litterateurs* should also follow the example of Tagore. Happily it seems, in most cases, the progressive writers have lined up with their brother in foreign countries. There are very few who do not favour such a unity. But though this is true of the politically conscious writers there are some who still linger on in the nineteenth-century atmosphere of art for art's sake. This minority could not become a majority, perhaps in some cases such *litterateurs* are better left alone since they are not at all inclined to co-operate. But all the same effort should be made to enlist their co-operation. And what is more important the majority which favours link with the foreign writers should have clear-cut ideas about it in their mind, just as Tagore had.

In this connection Nehru too can provide good inspiration. There are certain elements among the U.P. workers, who have a habit of putting sectarian interests first and forgetting

the greater issues of the solidarity of the international working class. These people would do well to follow the example of Nehru. Nehru's attitude towards India's participation in the work of the collaboration with foreign unions need not remain a matter of speculation in this country, for it is on record that he has since the outbreak of the war repeatedly said that he believed in the ideals for which the Soviet Union was striving.

The writers of the United Provinces are for the most part anti-fascists andin favour of the collaboration with the foreign workers but there are not a few who dabble in old-fashioned literary pursuits and turn out the stuff in vogue centuries ago. These men who for the most part write in Urdu or Hindi should learn from Nehru the writer what it means to have contacts with foreign writers.

To the writer and it applies to artists and engineers too, foreign contact is doubly useful while it encourages a feeling of fraternity with the progressive authors everywhere, at the same time it gives the author the much-needed foreign publicity. Nehru is one of the most foreign publicised writers. A good deal of his fame as a writer depends on the foreign publicity which he as a socialist author has received. If the Indian writers could get identical popularity abroad (some of them like M. R. Anand and Subhas Bose have achieved popularity abroad very nearly resembling that of Nehru) then it could be an immense asset to them in their writing work. It would enable them to frater-

nise with the foreign writers. Would they follow politically the path of the two socialist writers of India?

III

CHINA

The Chinese were Tagore's immediate neighbours, and so far as Nehru is concerned, China was one of those countries which had inspired him to make prophetic utterances on foreign affairs. The Chinese have also been the cause of the similar inspiration for the Bengal Poet.

They are one of the most ancient inhabitants of this world, with a record of civilisation second to none.

However, for some time past, at least for the last twenty years or so, they have faced constant wars.

Twenty years is a long period for internal and external wars. It leaves little time for artistic pursuits, such as poetry, fine arts, architect, civil engineering or production of fine books.

Then the reader would say the Chinese should be written down as indifferent and pathetic to the affairs of others, and a people without much recent artistic or such achievements.

Is it so? What about Lin Yutang, Anna May Wong and other artists and writers of China. No, China has time to think deeply about her affairs, and about the affairs of the world, even while the guns boom and cannons roar, and charred houses and debris-littered streets pre-

vent the daily bringing out of a newspaper, the publication of a journal or the production of a book in conditions which we of peaceful countries consider as normal. The people of a country fighting a patriotic war of liberation can (as the British and the Russian example shows) turn out literature of the finest calibre, and read literature of the other peoples.

They have no doubt read all that Tagore or Nehru wrote as well as the people of this country have done. And they have made immense use of it.

Nehru's experiences about British rule in India, Franco regime in Spain, the German Republic and the French Government proved of great help to them.

The Chinese have their own outstanding problems with Britain. They parted company with the city of London financiers as early as 1925, though not without some initial trouble and a good deal of breaking of heads on both sides. Nehru could give only occasional advice at that time as he was not much aware of the affairs of China. But as time passed, he advised the Chinese to study their relations with Britain on the basis of economic programme and formulate their policy accordingly. It was a question of imperialism *versus* the empty stomach and not a matter pertaining to racial antagonisms. Similar advice had been tendered by Lenin, but as he spoke from the communist pulpit, only communists or communist sympathisers in China heard what he had to say. But in the case of Nehru all

those who had suffered at the hands of imperialism listened to what he had to say.

For some time, whether out of war exigency or patriotism, the nationalist element in Kuomintang united with the communists and carried on the fight against the common enemy who practised uncommon brutality. However, now it seems the unity is ended, and a new chapter of discord is being written by the bellicose faction among the Kuomintang.

Now clearly, some of the Kuomintang leaders have forgotten the spirit and the letter of Nehru's writings, and they are ignoring his clear-cut analysis of the economic bases of imperialism in China.

The disaster in the internal politics of China has begun, and we have yet to bear the last of it. When China is torn asunder by internal war and destruction takes its heavy toll, then and not till then, the nationalists would heed the words of Nehru.

Similarly, the Franco regime has been criticised by Nehru. He has written copiously about Spain, describing the civil war, the air raids on Barcelona, Valencia, Madrid, Malaga, the razing to the ground of San Sebastian, Guernica, Irun, the battles of Ebro, Teruel, Guadalajara, Guadaramma. He described how a country could get ready for surprise air attacks and defend itself from the demons of the air.

These were practical and eminently sensible schemes of A.R.P., and the Chinese benefited from it. Moreover the comparison of Chungking and Madrid defences by Nehru was timely

one; as the Chinese capital was experiencing some of the worst onslaughts of the Japanese air warfare. Chungking-dwellers in particular could benefit from Nehru's writings. Leaders of China have often and in terms befitting the position of Nehru paid homage to the Indian leader and recognised the debt that they owe him. But it is only after the end of the China War that the true extent of this debt would be assessed; and then the Chinese would honour the Indian politician as they have honoured few foreign politicians in the past.

Take the instance of the German Republic. It was friendly to China. The Chinese press then honoured it. Then came the Nazi regime. The Chinese attitude towards it was in the beginning not unfriendly. In fact General Falkenyan stayed in China long after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war, and was recalled only when there were jitters in Tokyo Imperial Court circles, and protests were telegraphed to Wilhelmstrasse to end this policy in China. The Wilhelmstrasse yielded before the Shogun Dynasty, just as the German Emperor had yielded and allowed German islands in the Pacific to become the Japanese strongholds. But even after the recall of the German general from China, Chungking's attitude towards Berlin was marked for its giddiness. China proclaimed itself hostile towards the Japanese fascism, but it hobnobbed with the German Nazis. No wonder the communists screamed anathemas against Chiang for this reason.

However, China needed to be corrected;

and this role of the political mentor was played by Jawaharlal Nehru. He reminded them of the Chinese loyalty towards the Weimar Republic, and the German love for China.

This feeling of love, argued Nehru, could exist only on the basis of ideological affinity. Since the core of the principles of the Weimar Republic was anti-imperialism, this identity between the two countries was understandable. But in the case of the Nazi Germany, why continue to treat it in the same way ? Why not end the anomaly of such relationship with Germany. It was this kind of trend of reasoning which ultimately prevented their statesmen from what seemed to be political bankruptcy.

The French, like the British, have made use of their nearness to the Atlantic to expand fanwise in different directions of the world. They have in some cases lingered on in places, where they were least wanted. Indo-China is one such example. This country is a French problem, and it is a Chinese problem as well. The population is predominantly of Chinese origin, though Thais, Annamese and Burmese also abound. The French-speaking Indians form part of the population. The Chinese naturally want *Anschluss* with Indo-China, though it is amazing how they could carry on administration of such a vast land from the fringes of Siberia to Saigon and further up to Thai-Indo-China border. A solution of this problem would be Indo-China autonomy. But the French do not grant it.

Nehru has favoured liberation of Indo-

China from the French yoke; hence the Chinese praise for him. What about Tagore? What are his opinions on these so very important matters? And how did the Chinese gain from him?

First of all, let us take the British imperialism and the Japanese imperialism. Like Nehru Tagore analysed the cause of China's poverty to be the imperialist domination of the other Powers. It seemed strange to him, how a country rich in internal resources could be reduced to such degrading poverty. He thought the Chinese to be poor; but not the 'mudfish' of Noguchi's writings. He treated them instead as human beings, with the same rights as any other people; and the same aspirations and ambitions. Nothing prevented him from giving a rough deal to the Japanese, if and when the Japanese really deserved it. Also he made it clear that whatever progress the Japanese had made, had not dimmed the glory of the ancient Chinese culture. The Chinese had achieved a level of civilisation in all respects, which the Japanese might well envy.

This comparison of the Chinese with the Japanese in so far as high level of civilisation was concerned made Tagore popular with the Chinese. They have never thought themselves to be inferior to the Japanese in any way, and Tagore's ideas stimulated their imagination and they could in several matters of technical progress come up to the Japanese level without feeling the shame of any inferiority complex.

Tagore was not a student of air warfare in

Spain or elsewhere to instruct them in the matter of civil defence. He could not say how Chungking could be made impregnable. But he could certainly tell the Chinese a thing or two which could prove of immense advantage to them so far as their morale was concerned.

The British, he thought, had also their share in this giant carve-up in the East. This brings us to his theory of imperialism. It was not a Marxist theory. It was based on the belief which as a poet he took pains to nourish —that once science became of greater importance to people than art and beauty then the days of civilisation were numbered. He wanted the love of science and art to be harmoniously blended in human mind. He thought the Japanese and the Western Powers to be too much proud of their scientific achievements. This pride was the forerunner of the ambitions of imperialist expansion.

It is not clear how far this talk about the blending of art and science was mystical and how far it could be measured in the terms of reasoning as the civilised man understands it. Suffice it to say that he had denounced imperialism, and in this he came very near to the philosophy of Nehru.

He could also describe the condition in India under imperial rule, but in this he could not like Nehru draw on personal experiences in the struggle for freedom. He could only say and with justice that if he as a poet could find such a large measure of response for his ideas of socialism and freedom among the po-

pulation of the country, then surely the Chinese politicians and *literati* could in a similar way prepare their country for its struggle, and give its people the sorely needed education in scientific socialism. Tagore was himself in the beginning an idealist socialist, but towards the end of his life he veered more and more towards scientific socialism.

As has been pointed out, Tagore could not instruct the Chinese in the Spanish method of civil air defence, as he had never visited Spain, and could not be expected to be as well acquainted with it as Nehru. But he had great sympathy with the struggle for freedom carried on by the Republican Armies of Spain in Europe. This sympathy could be a source of moral encouragement to the Chinese.

About the German Republic, Tagore had great sympathy with it. He had witnessed the two German administrations, the pre-Hitler and Hitler period. He liked the former, though he did not like the latter. Like Nehru, he cemented the relations between Republican China and Republican Germany. And when the Hitlerite administration came he saw to it that the Chinese detested it. He was not happy about Chiang Kai-Shek's association with the German fascist military clique.

This is not to say that he was indifferent to certain qualities of the German people, just as he praised the Japanese people as distinguished from their Government; similarly he praised the German nation and wished it would get rid of the Hitlerite clique.

The French administration in the East was included by him in the category of imperialist rule; which he wanted to be ended. He visualised a China which could embrace all the predominantly Chinese areas (those countries which were geographically part and parcel of the greater China).

Indo-China was a principally Chinese country; and there was no reason why it should not have *Anschluss* with China; if it so chose. It could alternately become an autonomous state. These then were the main points of agreement between Tagore and Nehru about China. It would be observed that there was a goodish measure of harmony between them on this subject than even on the subject of socialism (in which matter there was harmony only after Tagore's visit to Russia and even then the Poet did not become a member of any socialist organisation or actively aid the cause of socialism).

But in spite of such great identity of interests between the two leaders in the matter of China, it was not always possible to co-ordinate their activities.

Tagore had visited China in the middle twenties, when the sparks of civil war seemed to consume the very existence of that country and then leave its face charred beyond recognition.

He repeated his visit after the Manchurian debacle, and when the Japanese struck treacherously near Marco Polo Bridge on July 7, 1937; then he sent a message to Chiang Kai-Shek which was a sort of warning to the Nippon

just as the quarantine speech of Roosevelt in 1937 warned the Axis countries to play the game fair and desist from disturbing the peace of the world. Thereafter, we find that in 1939 and 1940 he, along with other distinguished citizens of Bengal, re-echoed the sentiments expressed by him previously.

In the same period Nehru's activities were :

1925—28

He associated himself with relief work of medical aid to war-torn China.

1929

Inaugural address at the Lahore Congress favouring a closer identity of interests with the Chinese.

1933-34

Denunciation of Japan in his autobiography and open support for China. A copious documentary proof of his pro-freedom sentiments so far as the Far East is concerned.

1935—37

Repeated denunciations of the Japanese. Withdrawal of affiliation from the Indian Congress Committee in Japan. Boycott of the Japanese goods sent to India. Protests from the Consul-General in Calcutta.

1938-39.

Visit to the Chinese theatres of war such as Chungking, Yunnan, Changsha, Lashio. Denunciation of Japan as aggressor in Congress war manifesto.

1940

The above denunciation repeated in many speeches.

1941-42

Pearl Harbour outrage condemned. Common front of freedom-loving people in the Far East proposed. Britain asked to expedite aid to China, so as to prevent complete breakdown of the machinery of administration.

It is clear the two men quite often issued statements about China independently of each other, and visited that country with their own particular associates rather than going there together. But it is not difficult to see when the collaboration was very close. In 1925—27 the aid-China policy brought the two men together. In 1929 Tagore backed up Nehru as the coming man of India and thus *ipso facto* dotted the i's and crossed the t's of the 'Free Asia' speech.

In 1933-34 period he spoke against Japan while Nehru was locked behind the bars. In 1935—37 he backed the policy of boycott of the Japanese goods. He spoke frequently against Japan in 1938-39 and in 1939 he associated himself with Congress manifesto against the Axis.

Thus often there was active collaboration and co-ordination of activities of the two men, and when there was not co-ordination the spirit and the letter of their speeches or writings about China differed little from each other.

Would it not have been better if the two had established greater liaison with each other?

This is hardly the time to ask that question. When the sum-total of their activities showed that startling results had been achieved in matter of aid to China one should not bother about

factual collaboration in all cases. The Chinese have yet to show that they could do for India, what Tagore and Nehru have done together for China.

The stress in both cases was same and according to the law of stress and strain, the strain which each of them employed was hardly different. There was difference sometimes in approach to the problem. The philosophical background of Tagore's approach to China was humanism, while Nehru calculated in the terms of political front of two countries against the twin evils—imperialism and fascism. To sum up it was like Gorki and Litvinov's attitude towards Britain or China (or for that matter any other country of the world). The two Russians, both internationalists, could hardly step in each other's shoes. Nor could they collaborate in details as Molotov and Litvinov do.

Similar was the attitude of Tagore and Nehru towards China. The goal was the same. Means often same. Stress and strain same. But the angle from which the two approached the problem was not same always. This should however not make any difference to the Chinese—our neighbours since the dawn of history.

IV

INTERNATIONALISM

From love of China, internationalism is a stepping-stone. Napoleon's statement "when China moves it would move the world" is extremely pointed in this case. To China have come also the civilised people of the world—Germans, Britons, Irishmen, Indians, Japanese, Spaniards, Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, Swedes and Dutchmen. Many of them went as traders, yet others as engineers and builders; some as colonial rulers, some as international experts of the League of Nations. Also went to China Indian coolies and the Japanese desperadoes whether of military services or as dope-pedlars.

If so many races meet together in China, it is no wonder that thinking of the Chinese problem, one begins to think of the world problem. Both Nehru and Tagore used China as a stepping-stone to their internationalism. This country helped them to formulate their international theories. Their own country also helped them. India has always thought of the wide world as the centre of her interests, though it must he confessed that quite often Indians inspired with such zeal never looked beyond the limits of Asia.

Tagore and Nehru looked beyond the geographical limits of Asia because they saw that like China, many European races had co-mingled

in India, and as if, by such action, made it necessary for enlightened Indians to take interest in them, and in their countries of origin. Travel had also made them internationalists.

Family education in liberal or liberal scientific tradition also tended to encourage this belief.

We have compared the Indian leaders with Gorki and Litvinov in the matter of their attitude towards China.

This is all very well so far as that country is concerned. But in the sphere of broad international affairs do the above two leaders answer to the description of Gorki and Litvinov, the Russian leaders, who became world leaders ?

Obviously no. For one, scientific socialism or Marxism was always the guiding spirit of Litvinov or Gorki's ideas. In some cases the Soviet writers might have thought in terms of brotherhood of writers and artists (Marxist or non-Marxist) of all countries. Sometimes too, the Russian statesman may have acted in terms of liberal politics of other countries—playing the game of the liberal statesmen of Europe. However this does not belie the fact that Marxism moved the two men in their international attitude.

In philosophy, humanism itself is part of that term which goes by the name of 'idealist philosophy'. However, in practice sometimes one has to abandon the intensely narrow application of philosophical terms—when, as in case of Nehru and Tagore, we find two men

pursuing same ends from two different angles.

In case of Nehru, as the China example shows, the anti-fascist and anti-imperialist motives were the main 'switch levers' which acted as 'open sesame' to his international world. Quite often he was as much humanist as Tagore and took the stand that man had certain inherent rights, and these, if they were violated by someone else, necessarily called for action in support of the aggrieved person. All right-thinking persons, who had even an iota of sympathy with him should aid him. For Tagore man's inherent rights were the main 'switch levers' which opened into his international world. He often called mysticism and poetic emotionalism to his aid and later, like Nehru, made it a point to (sometimes) have a go at the imperialists and the fascists.

Does this adherence to idealism intermingled with Marxism or humanism make much difference so far as the advancement of the international cause is concerned? Obviously it does. Nehru's idealism, whatever its faults, involved action in support of his ideas.

Tagore's humanism often involved no action, and it was for the most part a moral condemnation of the wrong-doer. But here again we are in danger of interpreting the 'action' too narrowly. In point of fact strong-willed internationalists like Tagore as distinct from pacifists were always prepared to go to any length, should the world opinion so decide. They were for 'moral sanctions' so long as there was not enough backing for military sanctions. But

if all internationalists backed military sanctions, such humanists fell in line with the majority decision, and enthusiastically welcomed it. Internationalists are not in majority in the world that there should be any such factionalism among them. They form a minority and such differences as between Tagore and Nehru do not count and should not be counted.

For purpose of discussion, however, we can clear up this humanist idealist imbroglio by saying that if comparisons are to be made, then let Nehru be called Benesh of internationalism, while Tagore answers to the description of either Tolstoy or Karl Kapek—the Czech writer.

Both the Czech leaders thought the interests of their country to be as important as service of the internationalist cause. It was not a narrow-minded nationalism. Hedged on in all sides by powerful neighbours and having been wronged by the Germans, the Poles, the Hungarians, the Austrians and the Russians (the Czarist mercenaries), the Czechs after the last war were naturally cautious. They wanted their suspicions to be removed, and today when they have no longer any fears from the Russians, they still want assurance of safety from their other neighbours. This, leaving aside Germany, would be no doubt forthcoming.

Is it any different from similar fears about Britain and America as well as Japan, which find strong expression in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru? Have not these men feared the predatory (not

so much in case of America, where only a section of Wall Street capitalists is imperialist-minded) claims of the three Powers? Do they not want security against them, and have they not like Benesh and Kapek felt reassured about the U.S.S.R. and found comfort in having such a friendly neighbour?

Nehru has not attended any session of the League of Nations as plenipotentiary of his country nor for that matter has he attended the meetings of statesmen where peace problems are thrashed out. He has had not much experience of constructive statesmanship. Benesh had all this. And yet could one familiar with utterances of both lay his hand on the heart and say that Nehru has been any less friendly towards the rights of the small Powers as the Czechoslovak leader? Tagore has not acquired that popularity in Europe as a writer, which has gone to make the name of Kapek so familiar in European bookshops and literary circles as well as the homes of the working class and the intelligentsia, where he is read with not an undeserved pride. But he is not less outspoken in matter of the rights of the smaller Powers than Karl Kapek.

Among these Powers one includes Czechoslovakia, which always found in Tagore and Nehru a great admirer of its cause. Nehru's writings abound in graphic references to Czechoslovakia and he often lifted his voice to render all possible aid to that victim of German barbarism and Teutonic savagery.

Tagore also issued appeals on behalf of

Czechoslovakia. Both these men helped to find jobs for Czech refugees in India.

Nehru's paper *National Herald* and Tagore's mouthpiece *Modern Review* both proved immensely useful in this matter. The latter paper often published graphic accounts of Czechoslovakia and illustrations accompanied these accounts. To be fair to the Czechs, the latter also played prominent part in mobilising the world opinion on the side of the Indians. Both the Czech Foreign Minister and President Edward Benes or Benesh and Karl Kapek were prominent advocates of Indian freedom.

This exchange of freedom greetings between the Indians and the Czechs was a happy feature of the internationalism of Tagore and Nehru, but it was not by itself enough.

What else could be done? If it was not possible to get India well represented at the League of Nations, then there were other institutions such as I.L.O. which could be bolstered up and encouraged by these two men. That to be sure they did. They wanted the I.L.O. to take up such problems as child labour, the woman labour, and the badly paid labours in India. Tagore was particularly worried about the condition of Assam tea farm coolies, the miners in the coalfields of Jharia and Jamshedpur, the jute-workers and the Tata factory workers who were quite often at loggerheads with the management. In his novels he had depicted such coolies coming to cities from villages, and leading a life of semi-starvation or starvation.

And the horrible tasks that women labourers had to perform were utterly revolting to his good sense.

He knew that in many countries the conditions were as bad or even worse, and that was why he sponsored international action to end the horrible condition of the slave-labour in India.

Tagore was not unaware of the condition of the labourers outside Bengal. In Punjab, U.P., Bombay and Madras it was the same story. International action alone could end this miserable state of affairs. Nehru, the socialist, similarly wanted the I.L.O. to take the matter in its hands and act speedily. He also saw to it that as far as it lay within their power, the Congress ministries did whatever they could to end the rotten state of affairs in working-class districts.

Closely allied to this international problem of the workers was the problem of the welfare of women. This matter was taken up by the All-India Women's Conference just as the workers' problems fell within the purview of the Trade Union Congress. But Tagore and Nehru, like the women leaders, Sarojini Naidu, Vijaylaxmi Pandit and Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, thought that it was an international matter and one deserving attention of the League of Nations. Therefore he sponsored international moves to end traffic in women and children.

Similarly Nehru, whose sister is a leading feminist of India, a Mrs. Pankhurst in her

own way, has associated himself with the life-task of his sister.

Mandates and colonies also form part of huge plan of human welfare which devolved on the League. In these mandated territories it has not been always possible for the British and the French administrations to grant elementary human rights to people inhabiting these territories, with the result that there has been increasing demand for the establishment of autonomy. Indians, who in some cases form quite a large group of the population in these areas, have backed up these demands. Another instance of such agitation is provided by those countries where Indians do not live. Palestine is one such country. Here the Indian sympathies have been forthcoming.

Closely allied to this mandated territory problem is that of territories, where mandated rule has been (in recent times) deliberately foisted on the people. One such example is the Italian thrust in Abyssinia, which has been since then hurled back on the Italians themselves and has hit them like a boomerang.

In the case of Africa, Zanzibar, Palestine and Abyssinia, the two Indian leaders sponsored the freedom movement.

Drug and dope peddling was the other evil which had to be combated internationally. As a first step to this move prohibition was introduced in Congress provinces. Tagore favoured it. Nehru aided it. As considerable part of India consists of its peasants who have taken to drugs and narcotics like their proto-

types in China of ten years ago, and in Russia of the Czars (*vodka* was drunk in Russia by the peasants as much as the coarse wine was used in India), the evil had to be stopped, and the peasants educated to shun it if socialism was to have any meaning. Hence the speeches of Tagore and Nehru in favour of prohibition, and the stress laid by them on this aspect of the peasant welfare.

Cultural co-operation is another way of fostering international co-operation. What constitues cultural co-operation between nations? We have seen that both Nehru and Tagore as writers sought contact with foreign writers; as a means of fraternisation—that foreign publicity aided them in their tasks. But was this by itself sufficient? Could mere contact with foreign writers be termed as cultural co-operation? It is no doubt a milestone on the road to international co-operation, but not enough by itself.

What else is required? Interchange of cultural missions, consisting not only of the writers, but educationists, and literary critics, the publishing experts and to give it a democratic touch, a group of citizen readers. These missions (whether they are sent from India to Russia, Britain, China, Australia or America on reciprocal basis) could prove of immense use in fostering feeling of amity and at the same time lead to progress of art and literature.

Nehru and Tagore's visits to foreign countries were often actuated by such ideas. It is on record that Tagore's Santiniketan professors and

his close journalist friends such as Kalidas Nag often accompanied him in his foreign visits. Of course, the Poet was not a specialist in all branches of literature or cultural affairs and therefore he had to be chaperoned by these men just as he chaperoned them in some branches of literary activity in which he was a specialist. They also studied such matters as music, painting, languages, etc., and came back to enrich Santiniketan and Sriniketan with their experiences. They also contributed articles in papers and in this way enriched the journalist world.

Foreign newspapermen, journalists, authors, art academies, science institutions, etc., benefited from their presence similarly. They came to know more about India and respected the cultural progress of this country more and more.

In case of Nehru, of course, be it said that such formidable array of experts never accompanied him. He was mainly a politician. His missions were political but, all the same, sometimes when he had time and interest, he took the opportunity to establish cultural relations with foreign countries too. Men of science, and men of art, of other countries met him just as they met Tagore.

Quite often it so happened that men of letters of other countries visited India. Sometimes they met Tagore and Nehru, and on these occasions they were taken round to India's cultural centres and shown what progress had been achieved by India in this matter.

This was of course a beginning, and a very

small one at that time. Progress in this direction could be made in the way suggested above. That contains a broad outline of the plan to foster international amity by establishing cultural relations between the various countries of the world. And once we have the cultural relations as above, then there could be similar relations in various other matters—for instance, liaison in technical mattersc ould be established by the groups of workers and engineers visiting such countries on reciprocal basis. There is no doubt that Nehru has such a plan in view, for as one of the chief sponsors of the committee called 'Friends of the Soviet Union' he has made efforts to establish relations of cultural co-operation with the U.S.S.R. This relationship would no doubt progress well, and the 'Friends of the Soviet Union' take it upon themselves to foster more and more cultural relations with Russia in every conceivable way.

In matter of China Nehru's interest has not flagged either. The visit of the Chiangs was harbinger of such cultural relationship. Now more could be done in this matter too.

Tagore leaves behind a legacy to us, and we have not only to cherish it dear, for the sake of the departed leader; but also to make use of it in all directions. Would we do that or would we sit and twiddle our thumbs while the rich wealth of other nations' culture remains a remote thing for us and our own wealth in this matter is not by any means accessible to them. (Except through normal channels of

the book trade. The bookseller is a friend of culture. But it is not enough to make him a cultural representative in other countries. He is necessarily a commercial man and could serve the cause of international cultural relationship only in part.)

It seems Tagore's institutions, Santiniketan and Sriniketan, could play important part in this matter. They were the beacons of light and learning guiding the India-bound foreign travellers. They came, rested only to return back to their countries richer in experience. They pooled their intellectual resources with those who were responsible for the administration of Santiniketan and Sriniketan.

The two institutions should even now carry forward that tradition. Thus could the international co-operation in educational, technical (including mechanisation and engineering, all branches) and cultural matters be encouraged and the veil that surrounds other countries and our own effectively lifted up.

Once cultural liaison has been established (or even before that) the bases of political liaison are also laid, and interchange of political missions between the nations, similar to the cultural missions, could also take place. In case of this latter aspect of the international problem, these institutions could count on the support of Nehru, the politician, who would of course willingly give it. Then the days of complete amity between one nation and the other are not far off.

IV

LOVE OF POETRY

This bid for increased world co-operation between one nation and another in matter of cultural progress and educational uplift, on part of Nehru and Tagore, necessarily brought about a change in their attitude towards poetry. They studied poetry with greater gusto, but now, it was clear to them that poet had to play a unique role in building up the world order of today. In the beginning they had tried to cultivate love of poetry in conjunction with love of politics. That was a welcome move. But it was internationalism, which was to give as it were, a finishing touch to their schooling in poetry. Internationalism moulded their poetic selves in the right cast. It seemed that when they looked at the world affairs there was a sense of realism in their attitude which other Marxists might envy. After all how many people there are outside the Marxist fold who love poetry and yet talk sense, when it comes to international co-operation. For most non-Marxist poets their own world represents the limit of internationalism. There are others who could not get over the effects of their secular education and when talking about internationalism implied by that term a narrow religious philosophy limited to certain countries. Did this internationalism encourage Rabindranath Tagore to write internationalist

poetry or Jawaharlal Nehru to read it ?

There are traces in the last poems of Tagore such as the *Fruit Gathering* which show obvious signs of this new trend. They are in support of peace—not peace at any price—but peace with honour.

Nehru has so far not given the world any literary or political work comparable in magnitude to the *Autobiography*. Now that he has come out of the prison, he would give us some such work and then we will be able to know his latest poetic trends but not till then. Perhaps this time we will get many more quotations of poets—this is mere speculation—one cannot know it, and if he does not quote poets, his actions would be the best guide. Necessarily without those actions the progress of internationalism in this country and elsewhere would remain incomplete.

His poetic trends are of interest to the world. But even without any obvious change in those trends, one might expect him to do something in nature of practical politics to help the cause dear to his heart.

In our own times people are not only interested in poetry, but also in the personality of the poet and his usefulness to the world, is what in the last resort counts.

So far as Tagore's poetry is concerned, the world has got all or practically all of it before them. Now it is for the Indian poets to follow his international trends, just as one expects them (following Tagore's lead) to have contacts with foreign writers

and promote cultural and intellectual co-operation between various countries of the world. Here, of course, it may be pointed out that after the Poet's death it may be difficult to find similar poets in India, as distinct from the writers of prose, who could carry forward the tradition of internationalism of Tagore. There is of course Sarojini Naidu. There is another poetess of internationalist views. Her name is Miss Bharti Sarabhai. These are the examples among the poets of India and there may be (not so well-known) a few others of their way of thinking.

Sarojini Naidu is the right person to do team work with Nehru in this matter, and cultivate among the intelligentsia the habit of reading the right kind of poetry. In this task, too, they can count on the support of the admirers of Tagore in India. She is a good internationalist, but not a socialist like Nehru. But it seems in this matter she could effectively (with Nehru's collaboration) carry on the cultural and political traditions of the late Poet.

VI

TRAVEL

Tagore and Nehru were both fond of travel. Gifted with the restlessness of the poet and the broad humanitarian ideas of the international socialist, the two leaders frequently went out to know more about the unknown lands, and to see that which had so far eluded their eyes, but about which they had read a lot, and which had tickled their senses.

Whither were they bound and which were the lands which fascinated these two, when they set out first (as most of us do) as knight-errants in the political world and the literary world ?

Leaving aside Nehru's early foreign education, which has been at length discussed in the previous chapters, we find that Tagore was the earlier traveller. His outstanding visit in those days was to Europe. He had been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. What did he see in Europe then? He saw the dynastic monarchies saddled with power for good (so it seemed then). Where these monarchies had democratic system to support it, the future was less bleak ; but where absolutism remained in power, the seeds of decay had been sown, and Europe was in none too good state.

At that time Tagore admired the great achievements of Europe, but pointed out with becoming courage that Asia had a hopeful

message to give. He noted with deserved satisfaction that the people of Asia were refreshingly free from war mania of all kinds. Was it true? Was it not a fact that the Japanese, secret and conspiring, always had their plans cut and dried, and wanted to push their knife into the back of Germany and benefit from the European war to build up their own power in the East?

Very true. This was going on behind the closed doors in the Japanese foreign office, the imperial palace or the secret meetings of the secret Dragon Societies. Japan was arming to expel European interests from the East. Having delivered the blow against Russia, it wanted to deliver the next against Germany, and thus make its position safe.

But how was any one to know what the intentions of the secretive Nippon were? Even the big Powers did not know anything about this matter. How could the individuals know these affairs?

Later on in 1916-17, when Tagore visited Japan, he told the people there that reckless authoritarianism had saddled itself in power and held sway among the people. They had to get rid of this imperialism to breathe as free men.

This was a very bold talk that the Japanese got from him. It was distinctly the result of his experiences gained in the previous European and American tours. If he had not visited Europe and America, could he compare the conditions in these countries with Japan? He could not do that. He could then neither praise the good

points of Japan nor criticise its bad ones.

The Japanese were in certain matters advanced than some Europeans, but in most worst than barbarians.

This ugly truth had to be held up before them and they were to be shown the mirror in their face. Only the hardened European traveller could do that. A simple poet (if Tagore were that, which he was not) would have become involved in emotional tangle about the good qualities of the Japanese and forgotten to give them a dressing-down which they richly deserved. A merely nationalist political poet would have sung the hymns about the new spirit in Japan and made the same mistakes as the non-political poet (the existence of such a person was not unlikely in that society, but in our own all poets are more or less inclined towards one party or the other) and if anything improved on him he would have carried on this march into the blind man's alley. Tagore was an internationalist poet. Therefore he avoided such mistakes.

However, then the spotlight was focussed more on Europe than on Japan in the Far East. What did the Poet think of Europe ? We have observed that he warned Europe in 1913 against the impending war. Could he repeat this warning now ? How could he do that ? How could he cross the submarine-infested ocean and reach the heart of the war-torn Europe, and make an appeal to the belligerents to end the war, and strive for freedom, peace and progress. The Atlantic was no more free from raids then than

it is today. Tagore went to America, and there told the people that the war in Europe must end soon, and the democratic rights of the man be honoured and respected.

The Americans heard this distinguished visitor to their country with respect and not only praised his speeches but also poems. America soon went to war to end war in Europe. Wilson re-echoed Tagore's sentiments, but Wilson's ideas remained paper schemes. They were never translated into action.

Tagore returned home hopeful about the average American's interest in the cause of freedom but disgusted with the way the peace politics were handled in America and Europe.

The foreign visits were repeated by Tagore in 1921. By then the storm in Europe had subsided. Peace had come, but what a shrivelled-up, emasculated ghost of peace it was! In America at that time they called a naval conference which recognised Japan's right to have navy and maintain it at the ratio of 5 : 5 : 3 to that of England and America. This meant rearmament with all the great ferocity that the nations so inclined were capable of.

Following the great Powers' example the Germans began secretly to arm the *Reichswehr*. Was this surprising to Tagore? Why should it surprise him? Did he become pessimistic and rage Cassandra-like about the future of mankind? No. He was not an emotional poet. He could not do that. He had foreseen that re-armament plans would begin to operate soon. When he spoke in Tokyo and New York in

1916-17, he foresaw this age when science would become the monster instead of being the servant of man.

Then he wrote a series of articles in the *Modern Review* and other papers elaborating his previous pleas for peace. It was tragic that the statesmen of Europe and America ignored these pleas. Soon the peril was to become clear.

1921—25 were the years of restlessness for the Poet. The visit to China in 1925 was actuated as much by the love for the Chinese as the desire to find in travel an outlet for his restlessness.

What he felt about China politically has been described previously. At the moment we are concerned more with the tourist than with the politician in the Poet. Not that he sacrificed either interests or considered one more important than the other. In fact he blended both the interests and sought not only to establish the cause of peace in China but also to find peace for his own tired mind.

How much had China changed since the ten years which had lapsed between his previous visit and the present one ? Much.

China, where Tagore travelled first, was passing through chaos resultant of the end of the Ming Dynasty. There was not much to see in it except for the fact that a resolute band of republicans battled their way forward against heavy odds.

Ten years later, the flag of the republic hoisted by Sun-Yat-Sen and Chiang Kai-Shek

fluttered high. Many new sites had been built including National University and Military Academy. Shanghai, Peking, Canton, Hankow and Nanking were all remodelled. Most of the modern areas of these cities, since then in part destroyed by the Japanese, were built after the year 1921. Fine factories and settlements around them were built by the Americans, the British, the Germans, the Russians, the Swedes and the Italians. It was not for nothing that these people wanted to stick to the original rights. These 'rights' meant their high standard of living which frankly speaking was much higher than the European settlers could ever dream of in their own countries. China gave them beautiful modern homes, ownership of steamers, lands and factories. They had this and they had girls to cherish dear. And they threw it all away—this golden opportunity to fraternise with the people of the East who had made possible their high standard of living.

Tagore saw all this. He met China's rulers and leaders, and he came to know more about the European settlers in China. He also visited Malaya, Burma, Siam and the Indies. Everywhere he saw the same change. New hopes filled the hearts of the people. They were changing, but those who adopted an attitude of belated superiority towards them stood where they were. They had not moved forward. They wanted to hold what they had.

Next time when Tagore went to China, instead of this struggle there was another one—

with the Japanese. It was more grim, and bloodshed on both sides took a heavy toll. He saw young China in grips with the last of the Eastern potentates. He did live to see the result of this combat, though today it seems to be a foregone conclusion. In Tagore's time it was not. The tussle went on as it did in 1925, with foreign vested interests, and we knew on which side his sympathies lay. However though he did not see the triumph of the Young China, as we see it today, we note from his writings that sometimes he was under that pessimistic mood which disturbed him after 1921, and which he sought to end by his visit to China in 1925. He was almost driven to believe that China might be dismembered. He did not realise that the treacherous Japanese would sign their own death warrant by attacking Britain and America.

In 1939 and 1940 travellers to the Far East reported certain Japanese war against the Western Powers. If Tagore had gone out then, his pessimism would have ended, and he would have been (like other travellers) filled with the new hopes about the forces ranged against Nipponian absolutism. His last year's writings about Japan should not however confuse the real issue—even then he cried death to Japanese fascists. He knew they had risen by sword, and would fall by sword. The fact that the end of that fascism did not come soon made him impatient. About the end itself there could not be any doubt.

But we need not view the travels of Tagore

only in the background of the various changes that had taken place in China in 1915, 1925 and 1935. There were other places besides the Far East which the Bengal Poet-Leader visited. He visited America too, and found a considerable swing towards peace, socialism and economics of abundance and the rest of the ideas which find a ready haven in a liberal democratic society. Communism was also less offensive to America's political Mrs. Grundies, Aunt Sallies and Mr. Dolittles. There were noticeably fewer Negro lynchings, and the Chinese and Indians were not treated with that distant courtesy which was relaxed only when visitors like Tagore or Vivekananda or such persons made their appearance. These people were respected for different reasons and even (not unusual feature of life there) without understanding them. It is doubtful if the philosophy of Vivekananda is understood there even then, as that gentleman is very obtuse to his countrymen even in spite of the fact that many respect him.

Tagore's poetry (especially political poetry) was understood later on, and in the thirties this Poet was as familiar to them as Upton Sinclair, Eugenie o' Neil, Mrs. Christie, Dorothy Thompson, Walter Lipmann and Archibald Macleish. Tagore no doubt enjoyed it, just as he enjoyed the sumptuous dinners given in his honour by his followers and the gatherings in Madison Square Gardens. Whether he was in society at New York is not known. We do not know whether any parties were given to him in the Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street. Perhaps

some literary-minded woman there—an American Eleanor Smith or Mrs. Van Der Elst—would give the world her memoirs and throw light on the way American societies received Tagore. So far we only know that the Poet had good audiences there in the thirties as earlier, and many a party was given in his honour. The Indians vied with Americans to respect him ; he gave them in return some advice, which they might cherish dear. He told how best they could live abroad, and keep the dignity of their country intact. He was not much enamoured of the activities of the intensely nationalist Sikh coolies who had gone there. These people were not all wrong. But they were often wrong. They did some very crude things while there and worked in conditions which seem to us today very shocking. The result of which was that there was visible deterioration of respect for the Indians in America. Came racial legislation and counter-moves in India which acerbated relations of the two great and friendly peoples. Tagore would have been pleased if before the American racial legislation, the Government of India had voluntarily recalled these coolies and compensated them with constructive jobs in India. By not doing that they made these people rabid nationalists and prevented their becoming class-conscious proletariat. But as things were, he was not pleased with these people. This is not to say that he was unsparing in his criticism about the legislative measures in America. He was not a lawyer, only a casual visitor, who loved America, and liked to be there. But he

was shocked as any citizen visiting the States then would be.

The Americans, for long, debarred these people from enjoying the rights of citizenship which they had no doubt well-earned. If repatriation was not possible, and either the Indian administration or these people themselves did not desire it then they were entitled to the rights of citizenship. The American legislation was not aimed at any particular section of the Indian population. But against all. They were rushing headlong into legislation. If they had appointed a committee to enquire into the grievances which the Indians and Americans had against each other, then these citizens (who offended either party) could be dealt with by the committees of the two nationalities. This was the democratic method, and one which could find approval of Tagore, the critic of racial legislation—but friend of Indians and Americans inhabiting the land known as the United States of America.

Indians and Americans in America today, when the Democratic Congress has done the democratic thing—if they have any respect for the Bengal and the Indian Leader—should follow his advice and form committee to solve their own problems—as problems there must be in the beginning when people coming from different countries settle down at one place.

France is another country which was often visited by Tagore. We have seen what his attitude was towards the French-Chinese problem in Indo-China. A similar attitude was adopted

by him in other matters too pertaining to the problems of the French Empire.

In Paris he was as well received as in New York. The society circles as well as the politicians, scientists and men of letters gathered together to meet him. Of course, there were necessarily some who were not lovers of poetry and who did not understand what he wrote, except for his internationalist poems. But these people were few in France as in America—they were becoming fewer as the time went on. The citizens in the modern world everywhere except those circles, where fantastic oriental poetry is appreciated, do not waste time on poets whom they do not understand. Just as they would send an M.P. or a politician packing home, if he did not satisfy them; similarly they treated the poet who did not satisfy them. Out he went of the literary circle and was forgotten. There was no oriental mysticism in respecting him, though of course in case of Tagore he did write often oriental mystical poetry. This was pointed out to him wherever his friends wanted to correct him. If the *Paris Soir La Humainite, Europe Nouvelle, Verdi* and *Echo de Paris* praised him, they were quick to point out his defects too.

Romain Rolland, Pertinax and Genevieve Tabious were his friends as well as critics, more friends than critics. The *Academie Francais* admitted him. They heard him, they respected him. They told him in which respects they were in need of him, and in which particular matter he needed to be corrected.

And when the drinks in these Parisian literary gatherings were consumed and the courses of meals finished, the Poet with his companions walked the banks of Seine, or passed near the Champs Elysees, the Paris Boulevards or the Notre Dame Cathedral, wondering whether he was not fortunate among the people of the East—some of them enslaved, others being beaten black and blue in the streets of Damascus, in Algeria, Morocco, Tunis, Indo-China, Shanghai and Canton by Frenchmen, filled with excess of pride of scientific achievements—to get this honour from the very Frenchmen. And he was also modest enough to think over his own shortcomings and find the way to end them. But somehow, such is the force of habit in men of Tagore's class, that he continued to write mystical poetry, and of course the French continued to forget the objects for which Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Napoleon, Lious Napoleon and Lious Phillipe lived—they forget the ideals of the Paris commanders. The Empire of the French is much worse ruled than any other countries held in subjection of the foreign Powers. France is liberated, French Empire is not. Frenchmen love Tagore. He has reached a place where he could not improve on his poetry. They can improve on his ideas in the sphere of politics, art, literature, *i.e.*, where his ideas are sensible! Would they do that ? Charles de Gaulle is a distinguished politician, a soldier and a good European. He is the core of the French front *populair* as Daladier was not and as Blum was

not. He has yet to show he is much different from them. But what concerns us most is that he is a distinguished writer too. Does he like Tagore? We do not know about his poetic taste. He may.

But other Frenchmen lesser placed than him know Tagore as well as they do Lamartiane, Balzac or Sacha Guitry, and France by the way is not ruled by Charles de Gaulle but by Frenchmen. Would the Frenchmen wait for a lead in this matter or would they act telling their leaders what to do? If the French do not act on Tagore's advice so far as their Empire is concerned, one might as well say that the time they spent on entertaining Tagore was wasted, and that that good gentleman who is now no more made a mistake in visiting France. He could go there incognito, if at all.

Britain was also visited by Tagore in his European travels. He was received there, much as elsewhere. Here again we do not know whether he was in society or not, but there is no doubt that distinguished men in the world of art and science visited him; critics like Edward Thompson, James Agate, Howard Spring, John Hilton and Desmond MacCarthy were among these people.

However as in France and America, so in Britain the Poet-Statesman, while paying due attention to the literary matters, had to make some observations about the subject of Empire relationship. He was not satisfied with the literary receptions while millions starved in India. In fact these receptions irritated Tagore,

for he had to feel on every occasion that his country was not being given a square deal.

Tagore visited Italy, Germany, Austria and the Balkan countries too. He saw the noted buildings in Rome, Venice, Genoa, etc.; but he did not forget the horrible figure of the Il Duce, whom even Michæl Anglo could paint only as a figure in Dante's inferno. We find him dead set against fascism of the sawdust Cæsar. He criticised it in his travels just as he criticised the mistakes of the other states which he visited.

This brings us to the other leader of the anti-fascist party—Jawaharlal Nehru. What were his travels?

Nehru visited almost all the places which Tagore had visited—all except one or two such as America. Of course he did not go to China in 1916-17 and later in 1925. Perhaps he missed to see those memorable events which might have inspired him—great political writer that he is—to write the story of the heroic efforts of the Chinese to build up their nation following the three principles of Sun-Yat-Sen. Perhaps, he would sometimes go again to China with this end in view and write more about China. Here we should pause to point out that when he went to China in 1939, he stayed there for a brief period, and wrote the impressions of his visit, which for their clarity and literary precision equal the best that Pearl Buck, Edgar Ansel Mowrer and Edgar Snow have written about that vast sub-continent. Whatever there was important about the political

aspects of his China visit has been written in the previous chapters. Now, we could only record his views as tourist.

He saw that even in war-torn Chungking the people continued to seek education. The universities flourished as of old. So far as the military education was concerned, this was being imparted to them in a large measure by the American and the Russian military experts. Here we might point out that Tagore did not see the work done by the American military missions, though he was doubtless aware of it. In case of the Russian military mission, he saw some of its achievements in 1925-26, but in 1916-17 such mission was non-existent, though a liaison had been already established between the revolutionaries of China and the Soviet communists.

But the greater part of assistance rendered to the Republican China by the Soviet Union took effect in 1937—39 and this fraternal alliance was not closely observed by Tagore. Nehru also saw the Soviet air experts along with the American Air Force (the A.V.G.) Commanders at work in building up the China Air Force in close co-operation with the Chinese themselves.

But it was in the sphere of the women's welfare that startling changes had been introduced in the social life of China. The women were no longer backward or indifferent to the world outside the four walls of their houses. They took interest in the politics of China, n world politics and were aware of their in-

alienable rights as human beings. They were co-partners with men in their common struggle. Nehru had not seen the condition of women in China in the previous two decades; but he had read a good deal on the subject and knew it for certain that they did not live in a happy condition; and were subjected to a low level of life due to the man-made laws. Himself a supporter of the cause of the women he was glad about the progress which the women of China had made.

Tagore saw the worst conditions of women in China, and then in 1925-26 he saw some improvement. In the early thirties he saw the Chinese women in a still better condition, but it was after the outbreak of war with Japan that they achieved real freedom. Tagore did not see it as Nehru had done.

Cleanliness in China in 1939 was not a conspicuous feature of the civil life in towns. There was the same dirty method of marketing which is to be found in India—that is, selling of the consumers' goods in open spaces without shelter. Nehru was associated with municipal work in his own country, and his own town; and he knew what sanitary living meant. He was not at all pleased with the conditions in China.

However, though one wishes that greater progress had been made in this matter in case of China, the war exigency could be offered as one excuse, and we might not for this very reason take a harsh view of those responsible for the municipal administration of that country.

But previously when Tagore went to China, this aspect of civil life so important to the modern citizen had not been attended to by the Chinese people. They were averse to it, and the condition of sanitation in the Chinese cities was not at all desirable.

Nehru in his visits made evident progress in establishing a united front between the Chinese and the Indian people on the question of freedom of the two peoples. There was no such freedom front previously. Nehru knew that China had sympathy with India since the days of the Republic, but the Chinese had not given vent to these sentiments. When in China Tagore witnessed the apathy of the Chinese people about the Indian problem. He tried for the same ends as Nehru, and succeeded to a very great extent—though the ulimate results (as stated above) were made evident only in 1937—39 period. Elsewhere in the Far East where Nehru went conditions in some respects were not as bright as those in China. Nehru found Indo-China to be less interested in the affairs of India than China. But was it to be wondered at ? That country had been completely colonised by the French since a very long time and popular opinion there practically stiffled. The Indians residing in Indo-China were sympathetic to the mother country.

Militarily this land was not as well prepared as China, nor were there any American or Russian instructors here. Nehru thought, and he was right in his surmise, that Indo-China could not stand the pressure of the

Japanese aggression. It would go under, just as Austria was occupied by the Nazis—even without firing a shot.

Tagore had neither time nor occasion to make such surmises, though he saw that militarily the French regime in Indo-China had not enough guts to fight the aggressor.

Municipal life in Indo-China was not different from that in China. Its main cities were as much clean, though not among the cleanest in this hemisphere. In case of earlier Tagore visits, so much progress in this matter had not been achieved. Women were not in bondage as was the case withwo men in some countries ; but they were not as free as in China. Earlier Tagore had seen them in much worse condition.

Education was not much neglected by the French authorities, but it was not up to the Chinese level. The French, it seemed, thought that the only use which the adult population could be put to was filling the post of soldiers in their colonial army. They were mistaken. The nationalism of the Indo-Chinese was soon to mobilise its forces against them.

Earlier when Tagore visited Indo-China the nationalist sentiments were not yet fully matured. It was only after the Chinese and the Indians had embarked on a programme which involved them in struggle with the foreign ruling Powers that the Indo-Chinese awoke to the need of strengthening the ramparts on the freedom front. Why should they lag behind, when all Asia was astir ?

The Indo-Chinese nationalism may yet prove an important factor in the politics of the Far East. Now the people are trying to get hold of the seaboard. The nationalists of Indo-China and other left-wing parties such as the communists and the socialists are aware of the strategic importance of their country. This is their trump card, and they would use it well. Outwardly calm Indo-China seethes with discontent and the volcano may burst any time carrying away the Japanese pebbles and stones in its flow. But necessarily the Indo-China people want freedom, not from the Japanese alone but from all alien domination Would the Americans enlist their support?

While on the subject of the Indo-Chinese resistance to the Japanese aggressors, we might as well compare notes about the impressions of Tagore and Nehru in regard to the situation in Japan. Nehru did not visit this country, but he heard a good deal about it while in China. At that time militarily the Japanese were quite advanced. In 1916-17 they were not. Tagore knew their condition then, and in thirties he was able to see that country again for himself and this time pointed out that the Japanese might was stronger than ever.

However the Bengal Poet did not hear in China in 1939 what Nehru as well as other foreigners heard about Japan. Accurate estimates of the Japanese strength were known to important people in China; though of course Pear Harbour was not.

Educationally, the Japanese were not much

advanced, when Nehru was in England seeking education. This was more or less same as what Tagore thought in 1916-17. By 1920 when Nehru had entered politics the number of schools and colleges was reported to have increased. Thereafter the percentage of literacy increased, though increase of intelligence was not visible and also political sanity was conspicuous by its absence.

While in China, Nehru gathered that the Japanese had made strenuous efforts to keep their educational level high, while doing everything possible to stiffle the growth of education in the occupied China, Korea and Manchuria. He also gathered that in these places the educational institutions were deliberately laid waste. Under these circumstances what was one to think about the education of the Japanese? This action of theirs was on par with the German action—when having achieved high level of education in Europe the Germans under direction of the Nazis started burning the books written by the socialists and the communists.

Municipal life in Japan was better than anywhere else in the East. Nehru had no time to study this problem about the Japanese municipal progress while in China. He was not in the mood for that. The Japanese had made any such study impossible due to their wanton behaviour in China ; which offended all

Earlier, however, when engaged in Congress ministry work, Nehru did point out that Indian municipalities could learn from foreign municipalities including those of Japan, Germany,

Austria, America, England, Russia and several other countries.

Similarly about women's affairs. In some respects the Japanese women were advanced like those of Western countries, and he wanted the Indian women to learn from them what they could and what was really worth learning. But mostly the Japanese women of the labouring classes were treated as serfs, and had no rights. This appalling fact was confirmed to him, when Nehru was in China.

India's front with Japan. Nehru did not object to it provided the Japanese had a front with China also ; and gave up their imperialist ambitions. Earlier it was possible to persuade Japan to have such a front, and be drawn into the family of the nations of the world. But since Japan was outlawed in 1931, Nehru like most sensible men never gave the matter a second thought. When in China this particular problem did not interest him at all.

Dealing with Tagore's views on these subjects one could only say that he adhered to his previous opinion of high educational level of the Japanese but in 1939 like Nehru he pointed out that education did not mean destruction of the cultural centres in other places by the Japanese. He thought that the Japanese never really cared for education as it was understood in the civilised world.

The Japanese municipal life was observed by Tagore in 1916-17. It was not better than the European countries but improving. In 1925 greater improvement was recorded. He wanted

Indians to benefit from the experiences of the Japanese municipal administrators. Later on this aspect of the Japanese life ceased to interest him just as he was unable to lavish praise on the progress achieved by the Japanese in various other walks of life.

Women's affairs fall in the same category. Tagore's own experiences did not prevent him from agreeing with Nehru, when the latter said that the Japanese women labourers were not at all well off, and were in many respects little better than the Indian labouring women.

Politically Siam never inspired either Tagore or Nehru to make any bold prophecies about its future role in the Far East, just as they had made in case of China and Indo-China. They thought it to be a very beautiful country with fine elephants, pagodas, temples and picturesque scenery, which delighted them. But they also saw that it was priest-ridden. That its rulers were weaklings and constantly sought foreign aid instead of trying to stand on their own legs. Little Siam, they thought, was out to get trouble and it got that.

But perhaps, conditions in 1916-17 were less revolting. Certainly that is true. Tagore was then silent about the political aspects of the life in Siam, though he had his own misgivings. Ten years later, Siam was deep in the bondage of foreign Powers, and by 1937, the Japanese had come on the scene, and made their position secure in that place.

Education in Siam was on increased level since 1930, but not as much as in Japan or other

progressive countries of the world. Here too the main opposition came from the priestly vested interests and the clique of the militarist-fascist type who wanted to give the Thais military education only.

However, since the Japanese infiltration there, the clock was put back, so that when Nehru visited Thailand, the process of making the Thais as intellectually down grade as the Koreans had already set in. Educational institutions were closed down, and instead turned into centres for imparting instruction in military goose-step. The monasteries either served the purpose of propagating the Japanese ideas or were made into veritable military fortresses, just as the Spaniards belonging to Franco faction did in Spain. The cup of the humiliation of the Thais was full. Nehru saw all this with his own eyes. Tagore was spared this horrid sight, though he saw Siam in the stage of illiteracy earlier. However then it was not a planned move to keep the country in a state of illiteracy. Priesthood was strong, but not the only powerful group. Liberals and democrats were trying to make themselves heard. Progress was possible. It came, but was later cut short before completion. The anger which Tagore felt was equal to that felt by Nehru.

But they were helpless to stop this downward movement. The only group over which they had any influence was that of the Indian settlers in Thailand. To this group they sent numerous messages asking them to throw their lot with the democratic elements in Thailand.

This they did. They tried to prevent the rot from setting in. But they found that the Quislings had bargained with the Japanese and had decided to put the clock back in Thailand as in Indo-China.

This group of Indians is today not much heard of in Thailand or Indo-China; but it would raise its head again, once the Japanese forces are withdrawn, and the strength of Shogun military-fascist clique is crushed. Then this clique would not be able to raise its head again and the democratic Indians following Nehru's lead (which is in this matter same as what Tagore would have done) would set the wheel in motion in the two countries (as they would elsewhere) and will see to it that in a short space of time the conditions there return to normal and people become democratic, educated and strong enough to defend themselves and play their role in the new League of Nations.

Municipal life in Thailand was negligible. It has few big cities most of which have good municipalities functioning, but in this matter too large measure of progress must await the end of the Japanese rule. Neither Nehru nor Tagore found anything special to report about these municipalities.

The condition of women was not satisfactory in Thailand. Like most backward countries in the East traffic in women was not uncommon feature of life here. This was what Tagore and Nehru observed. Moreover their education was neglected, and in the matter of marriage they were the slaves of men.

Progress in this matter would be slow in future, for with the Japanese infiltration a further deterioration has occurred in the condition of the women. When they return to their island homes, but without any plundered wealth, it would be time to carry on this work of women's welfare.

Next doors to Thailand are Malaya and Burma. Nehru visited these countries first in 1937, and then in 1939. Tagore had visited them on all these occasions he went to China and Japan or America *via* the Far East. What did they see in these areas? They saw that both these countries in the early years of this century as well as in the thirties were ill-prepared in the matter of the defence of the country. Militarily they were back numbers having no modern army, air force or navy. Politically, it was found that the Japanese agents had made deep inroads in the politics of the country, and created a situation favourable to themselves; and one which could provide them cover to effect the ultimate conquest of the country. The priestly nobles played prominent part and established the reactionary regime. Education in Malaya was non-existent during Tagore's early sojourn in the Far East, though conditions in Burma in this respect were slightly better.

As time passed, matters began to improve. In Burma the progress was achieved at a quicker pace mainly through the initiative of the enlightened Burmese politicians, and in part due to the efforts of the Chinese and

the Indian settlers. In Malaya, in such cities as Kuala, Lumper, Penang and Singapore, education had begun to spread, though greater part of the population was still illiterate.

The Indian settlers here were less enlightened, though there was a sprinkling of class-conscious workers and nationalist-minded middle class. Women's rights were not infrequently trampled upon, and their condition in Malaya was much worse than in Siam. In Burma the condition of women was not such as to win approval of Nehru or Tagore. The Buddhist *junkers* held them in bondage and would not give them the rights to which they were entitled. Municipal life had also not made much strides in either country, though in such cities of Burma as Rangoon, Mandalay, Prome, etc., the condition was somewhat better, and there were greater prospects. This applies to the bigger cities of Malaya also.

However, Burma had one acute problem which did not exist in case of Indo-China and Siam and which kept Tagore and Nehru pretty busy whenever they went to Burma. This was the problem of the Indo-Burmese and Sino-Burmese relations.

It pained Tagore and Nehru to learn that tempers rose so high sometimes on either side that it led to outbreak of riots and blood-shed involving huge loss of life on either side. The two men did everything possible to end this unnatural state of affairs between two sister countries, which once formed part of the same land—India. Nehru in the course of his visits to

Burma analysed the root cause of the differences between the two countries to be economic. He thought Burma needed industrial planning to make use of its untapped resources. He was aware of the fact that in certain cases Indians had made a lot of money in Burma, but he was for socialisation of the Burmese industry which would necessarily entail huge sacrifices on the part of the Indian community. However, the war resulted in heavy damage to the property of the Indians as well as the Burmese, and the chances of the dispossessed Indians in Burma recovering their assets are just nil, unless of course the British take the unusually bold step of making the Japanese pay in kind and in human labour (to be used for constructional purposes). Then, perhaps, the Indians might succeed in redeeming their lost property. But in that case Nehru's eminently sensible advice should be kept in view. This would smooth out the differences between the Burmese and the Indians. Tagore's view about the strife in Burma was based on this theory—that the Burmese had forgotten that culturally they had greater unity with India. He thought Buddhism to be an Indian cultural reaction against the cult of the Siva, the Hindu god. This did not mean that he was very much enamoured of Buddhism ; only he thought that the cultural unity between the Burmese and the Indians did exist in the past. Further the Indian settlers in Burma were loyal to their mother country, but not disloyal to Burma. He wondered why it was not possible to discard the old culture which

was extremely unsuitable for the modern needs and substitute for it the new and the more vigorous culture—the democratic ideas and scientific socialism.

He wanted the Burmese people to pay more attention to this matter. Needless to say that the Burmese leaders, pious, monastery-educated folk as they are, thought Tagore and Nehru to be heretics—following the doctrines which a fantastic U.S.A. woman Congress representative has described as "immoral". How could they follow immoral doctrines such as of communism, socialism, internationalism, and ideals of unity based on ultimate *Anschluss* of Burma and India?

So they ignored these doctrines and rattled on with their work of quietly handing over their country to the Buddhist brother Japanese.

About the Sino-Burmese problem, they offered similar advice, though of course they did not suggest that the Burmese should allow unrestricted immigration in case of the Indians or the Chinese. But as in the case of India so in that of China, this advice was unceremoniously brushed aside.

In Malaya no such problems existed. The relations of the Indians and the Chinese with local population were cordial.

Now we turn to the East Indies. Considering the problems which engaged the attention of Nehru and Tagore in China, Indo-China, Thailand, Malaya and Burma, one is inclined to laugh at the suggestion that such a geographically remote and politically obscure region as the

East Indies could ever awaken the interest of Rabindranath Tagore. And yet East Indies was as much a problem for these two men as Indo-China, Thailand and Malaya if not equal in magnitude to the problem of Burma and China.

What was the main problem of East Indies? It was the Dutch misrule. The Dutch, one of the first to turn the government of their country into a workable democratic state, forgot like several others to apply the lesson of democracy to those areas which had come under their rule, because they, once a nation of roving nomads, cast their anchor on these lands and having driven the local population into the jungles or finished them off decided that these areas should be given the name of the Dutch Empire. Thereafter as the space of Netherlands contracted in Europe, the Empire of the Dutch grew in inverse ratio to the homeland of theirs. This Empire of theirs was visited by Tagore in 1916-17 but not by Nehru. Tagore repeated his visits later on, but Nehru never set foot on its soil, though he heard a good deal about it, while he was in the Far East. What he heard was what Tagore had seen.

The sum total of their experiences was that the economic condition in the Indies was very bad, the Japanese had the monopoly of the trade, while other Powers, including the Dutch themselves, were treating the Indies as a colonial market which could be dumped with goods as often as they wished, while the inhabitants

were never told to learn to manufacture the articles for their everyday use, which alone could have made the islands sufficient in the consumers' goods and enabled the inhabitants to have a greater purchasing power. They could then have a higher standard of living. Educationally these areas were most retrograde. The Dutch had not encouraged the idea of the education of the vast number of the populace. Not to talk of education, they had not even encouraged the habit of wearing a good dress, so that, to the great scandal of the rest of the world, men and women in Bali went about with little or no dress at all.

Orthodoxy was rampant, and the cult of the temples and pagodas flourished with all the attendant prosperity of the priestly class. Indeed the orthodoxy had got so much hold of the population that most old rituals, which seem barbaric to the modern man, were practised by the inhabitants of the Indies. For instance, tribal dance of the Maori type in Africa was not an unusual feauture of life. Further in many places the people had no profession at all except that of petty shopkeepers or coolies; and on this they had to subsist.

Women were held in the same condition as in Thailand and even worse. Altogether it was not an inspiring sight for the politician to see.

The Chinese and the Indian nationals were well organised, and were in most cases of progressive views, and there were some organisations of the population too, formed with the object of obtaining political and economic

power, but these were few in numbers then, although with the passage of time they have grown in numbers as in strength.

These nationalists of the East Indies have a progressive and anti-fascist programme. They want to have the rule of their country in their own hands. They have sympathy with the freedom programme of the Indians and the Indians reciprocate their sentiments.

Both Nehru and Tagore tried to enlist the backing of the Congress for their cause and succeeded. In the resolutions of the Indian National Congress were also incorporated the demands of the inhabitants of the Dutch Indies. With the British and the French imperialisms, and the German and the Japanese fascisms, the imperialism of the Dutch came in also for rough criticism.

The bases of fraternal unity between the two peoples were laid by the two leaders. It is now for these two peoples to show that they can continue the programme of unity. Their leaders should take the initiative to strengthen this bond by the exchange of missions, etc. In this connection, we should remember that Tagore long ago pointed out that there was cultural unity between India and the East Indies, just as there was with Thailand, Indo-China, Burma and China. Relics of old Indian culture in the Indies proved that the two peoples had a common culture in the past.

This could no doubt prove of immense value in building up the future ties with these people. The Indian associations in the East Indies,

which are for the most part Congressite, could play their part in cementing the relations between the two peoples.

This cultural unity, coupled with an identity of interests in political and economic matters, would be a sure basis for the peace in this hemisphere. It should be extended to cover all the peoples of the East.

On the southern tip of India lies the Island of Ceylon, which was also visited several times by the two leaders. Its people have great cultural and political bonds with India; but like the Burmese, they too have been prone to forget the debt that they owe to the mother country. As a result of which people not at all friendly disposed towards India have played upon their separatist tendencies and sought to keep the two countries apart from each other.

The bulk of the Ceylonese however remained indifferent towards such fantastic schemes. If Sicily could shake off the Italian influence, Corsica that of the French or the channel islands that of the British; then perhaps Ceylon might separate from India. But even in that case, be it noted that India and Ceylon have been united with each other since a very long time, while the link between the Italians and the Sicilians, the French and the Corsicans, the British and the inhabitants of the channel islands has been of recent origin.

The two leaders have not found it difficult to persuade the people of Ceylon that unity was in their best interests and also it was the best thing for India.

The Indian National Congress (Ceylon) which is representative of the majority of the political-minded Ceylonese gave them on all occasions a hearty reception.

What about the other features of life in Ceylon? Did it satisfy Nehru and Tagore?

Educationally Ceylon was not retrograde, though of course not much progress was achieved in this direction—this being due to the fact that the power was transferred to the people late. But neither Tagore nor Nehru looked at the problems of Ceylon from the view-point of a friendly neighbour visiting the country next doors—that was at least their attitude in regard to China, Manchuria, Indo-China, Thailand, Malaya and the Dutch Indies. Ceylon was India just as Burma was India. They asked themselves—were there not certain areas in India which were educationally retrograde? They were being looked after by the Congress-men. Similarly there was need for the Congress-men to take interest in the affairs of Ceylon. This done, the progress achieved was amazing. In a short time Ceylon rivalled other educationally advanced areas of India. And the progress continued to be achieved in this direction.

Municipal life in Ceylon is similarly improving since Tagore and Nehru's visit, though leaving aside Colombo, other cities of Ceylon have yet to learn the elementary lessons of hygienic living. Women's condition is better. The All-India Women's Conference takes interest in the affairs of the Ceylonese women;

and does everything possible to improve their lot. All this is a forerunner of that greater unity, the achievement of which has become a duty with the Indians and the Ceylonese. A united front of the two peoples based on the ideals of common nationhood would last even after the achievement of freedom; for which they together strive.

Other notable countries visited by these people were Iran, Spain, Germany, England, Italy, France and Russia. We have described Tagore's experiences in France, Germany, England and Italy. That was of course how a poet reacted to such travels. We have now to deal with the Politician Nehru's reactions in so far as his experiences and that of Tagore coincided. In this connection too we should keep in view the previous method which we have employed in describing their joint experiences in the Far East, Ceylon and the Indies. That simplifies the task of recording a tourist's impressions or comparing the impressions of two tourists.

Iran was visited by Tagore in 1936, but not by Nehru. The former went there on an invitation from the Persian King Raza Shah. It was mainly a literary function, but the Bengal Poet had the time to see political changes in that country also. He saw a semi-industrialised and mainly feudal and tribal country being fast modernised by a group of energetic nationalists. They had increased the percentage of literacy by copying from the states of the Levant the methods of education. In the Levant, French

was the official language and education imparted on French methods. The German and the Italian languages as well as the methods of education in vogue in Germany and Italy (not of course the Nazi education) were also becoming popular in the Levant. The nationalists and the progressive people of Iran also followed these very methods. The trouble with some of the Iranian nationalists was however this that they were too much enamoured of the French, the Italian and the German institutions and too little of their next-door neighbour—the Russians, who were carrying on a huge experiment in the social history of man.

Tagore had no time to point it out to them. If Nehru had gone there he would have certainly asked the people of Iran to turn their attention to this much-needed problem. However, apart from these mistakes of the people, there were other redeeming features in their life which Tagore noticed and appreciated.

He was not a scholar of Persian and he could not describe the linguistic changes in Iran, which were the result of the impact of French on the Persian language; but this much he could say that the old methods of Persian poets were falling in disrepute, and also the prose-writers were giving up the fantastic old methods of writing prose. They had attuned their style in keeping with the needs of the times. Nationalism, liberalism and socialism were the driving forces for these *literati*.

Municipal life was being remodelled and the country was divided into numerous districts,

each with its own prefect responsible for the municipal administration in these areas.

Women's condition was better than in the neighbouring countries of Iraq and Afghanistan. New plans were afoot to change their position, educationally, legally, socially, etc., to their advantage. These changes were not sponsored by men alone, but by women leaders of the Iranian suffragette movement, so that women were to get freedom planned by their own leaders.

Industrialisation was afoot. New factories were set up. Roads built. Agriculture modernised. Vehicular traffic took the place of the ancient system of communications. When Nehru went to Russia, he also heard about the in-industrial changes in Iran. These were aided in fraternal spirit by the Soviet Union which had given similar facilities to other countries of the Far East. Similarly bilateral trade agreements had been signed between Iran and Russia to make Iran self-sufficient in every conceivable way and to increase the purchasing power of the Iranian citizen. Russian experts worked in the factories of Iran.

However, when Tagore went to Iran, it was different. The Nazi economic and trade *Drang Nach Osten* had extended to Iran, and German experts were sent to this country at the orders of Herr Funk. The Russians gradually withdrew.

Militarily, at the time of Nehru's visit to Russia, the Iranians were progressing aided by the Soviet military experts. Of course, Raza

Shah's genius as a military man was an important factor in the life of the people of Iran. But Russian aid was forthcoming in men (military experts), munitions, and the choicest books of Russia's choicest military academies.

At the time Tagore visited Iran, the tempo of Soviet military aid had become considerably less and comparatively the aid from the Third Reich was speeded up. All this has been aptly described by the Middle East correspondents of the Russian, British and American papers, as also of such French papers as *Echo de Paris*, *Populair L'ouvre* and *Europe Nouvelle*.

Neither the women's affairs nor municipal life had changed much in Iran in Nehru's days (Russian visit). In educational matters, progress was being made. Nehru came to know that the Russian aid in this matter too was forthcoming and had resulted in a steady change in Iranian life in the sphere of education.

Later Tagore saw German educational experts taking over the educational institutions of Iran, and transforming some of them at least into the bastions (since then fallen) of the Third Reich.

So far as language is concerned, what Nehru heard in this matter tended to show that the Russian impact on the Persian language tended to modernise it. The Persians had contact with a people who were free and treated them on equal footing. But it was too early to say what would be the changed shape of the Persian language. But the need of change was felt in 1927, and Nehru could see it as any one else.

Later other influences dominated the Persian life.

But that phase is now ended. Of course the Persian people can benefit from their impact with the Germans and the Italians, and when these countries can send their democratic experts (educational, military, economic and technical) the benefit to the Persians would be still greater. But for the present the Persian band wagon is hitched to the star of the Powers composing the United Nations.

No doubt this latter course has the approval of Nehru, and Tagore would prefer it to any other drift in Persian life. But it is not a question of the loyalty of the people of Iran with this country or that. The Iranian people, according to the Nehru and Tagore theory of world relationship, should avoid militaristic and fascist tendencies. Whether in future they want to be guided by the Germans, the Italians, the British, the Russians, or any other people is of course for them to decide. India wants a strong, well-educated and progressive Iran as its neighbour. Beyond that neither Tagore nor Nehru or any other leader could ask anything.

This brings us to the all-important question of Indian and world united front with the people of Iran. With a freedom-loving Iran, a freedom-loving India, headed by such men as Nehru, could have firm relationship. The two countries have sympathy with the ideals of freedom of each other, and this fact was confirmed by Nehru in Russia (whither Iranian democrats went) and by Tagore in Iran in 1936.

These were then the outstanding problems of Iran, which interested Tagore and Nehru. They had not much time to study any other matter. But the beauty of the Iranian country-side did not require a Persian poet to admire it. Nehru would have liked to go there for this reason, as for other political or educational reasons. But he had no time then for that. Now he might do so, if he can get time for it. He would no doubt like to visit other beautiful places too. The same applies to Tagore. He was more fortunate in getting a glimpse of Iranian beautiful sights but he could not stay there for long.

Adjoining to Iran are the countries of the Turkoman Republics and Afghanistan. Neither Tagore nor Nehru went there. But no doubt having gone very near to these areas, they heard a lot about these two countries. The Turkoman Republics were very much advanced in all respects in 1936. The country of Afghanistan was not so well advanced. In 1927, when Nehru was in Russia, sparks of internal strife were ignited in Afghanistan by a section of hothead reactionaries, but though Aman Ullah was on the right path, the Russians could not intervene on either side. They sympathised with the progressive people of that country. They wanted them to be free and to settle down to the task of the internal reconstuction of the country.

The conditions in the Turkoman and Tajik Republics were improving at the time of Nehru's visit to U.S.S.R. But obviously progress

could not be achieved in so short time. Only preliminary work had been done. The old debris of the orthodoxy was being cleaned up. Newer schools and hospitals were springing up. The Czars had made the population hostile to them. It was made friendly by the people of U.S.S.R., who combined their resources with those of their neighbours to speed up the programme of socialist reconstruction. Military education was being imparted to this once sullen and hostile population. The women achieved their freedom ; and cherished it dear.

In the days Tagore paid a visit to these areas, still greater progress was achieved in all the matters and modernisation had reached there a high level. As for Afghanistan, when Tagore went to Iran, this country had achieved much more progress than at the time of Nehru's visit to Russia. The internal strife had ended. Peace was restored and the scheme of reforms put into practice. It was of course a very slow method of effecting reforms and very irritating to progressive foreigners. But in any case that is the affair of our neighbours. Suffice to say that it pleased Tagore and Nehru that democratic good sense prevailed among the Afghans and they had after a brief household quarrel put their house in order and given it a cheerful and lively appearance.

In future these countries would achieve progress. As for a united front of the Indian people with them, this is of course natural in Tagore-and-Nehru scheme of things. But let it be within the frame-work of the world security

organisation.

In certain matters such as cultural and economicrelations, the Indians, the Tajiks, the Turkomans, the people of Iran and Afghanistan could have pacts, which could be translated into action without waiting for the setting up of an international security organisation (this applies to the Eastern neighbours of India also). Later all these pacts could be ratified by the international organisations. Tagore, as we have stated in the chapter dealing with his poetry and internationalism, would have welcomed such relations with the neighbours of India on her north-western and western (Indo-Iranian) frontiers. Nehru would no doubt favour it.

Across the borders of Iran and beyond the Levant and at the place near Corsica where the Mediterranean which is the Italian lake and the British North Africa lake ends begins another Mediterranean, which is sea of France and Spain, and the lifeline of the British communications with the Eastern half of the world. In this Mediterranean, which we might call the East Spain Sea just as the Pacific near to Chinese coast becomes South China Sea and East China Sea, lie the two major islands of Spain, Majorca and Menorca, and across the Straits dividing the Balearic Islands from the Spanish coast-line towards the huge harbours of Spain, Valencia, Malga, Alicante, Barcelona, etc. These harbours are the gateway of Spain—nay Spain itself, for they reflect the life and thoughts of the country in some ways if not all.

This Spain was visited by Nehru. His as

well as Tagore's political views about this country have been described in the chapter dealing with China. However that does not mean that their views have been fully stated—concerning *all subjects*. So there is need to discuss their views on other aspects of Spain. Naturally we will deal with Nehru's views first, since he visited Spain while Tagore went to France and Italy and there learned all about Spain.

Nehru found that economically Spain was as backward as the worst and the famine-ravaged areas of India. Illiteracy was not an uncommon feature of life there, indeed it was strongly prevalent in Andalusia, parts of old Castile, Navarra, and Catalonia. But there were redeeming features in the land where hunger was rampant and illiteracy stalked—the Spanish trade unions were carrying on a campaign for the liquidation of illiteracy and mass hunger. The C.G.T., the anarchist unions and the communist-influenced unions carried on a campaign based on the idea of co-operative village societies and village communes. Libraries which moved about from one place to another were organised. Food stocks were collected to serve the needs of all. The organisation of the Spaniards won the admiration of Nehru. He wished some such system could be introduced in India. So far it has not been. Now obviously there is time to introduce it, when the Indian peasants have large stocks of food. If they throw it away and hunger stalks the land, one should not only blame the administration, but also the political

parties of that area including the socialists and the communists.

The Indian political parties should also remember that Nehru went to Spain at a time when the Republic had been only recently constituted (the Spanish Republican administration continued in office till 1939 and these years which were spent not in maintaining internal order, but in quelling disorder). It was in this space of six years that the defects of the rule of Spanish monarchy were sought to be ended. It was in this period that illiteracy was ended in parts of Spain (formerly it was much more wide-spread). Hunger was also sought to be ended in this short period of six years. If the results are judged on this basis, they seem to be all the more remarkable. Few governments functioning, as the Spanish administration did, could do in such a brief period of six years what was done by that regime.

Looking at the affairs of women, one finds that similar progress had been achieved. The hold of the church had made the women of Spain some of the most backward in Europe, parts of the Czarist Russia excepted. But the Republican constitution recognised their equality, and what is more the Republicans made this equality a practical scheme—the trade unions and the political parties taking the lead in this matter. One of the leading exponents of the women's movement was Doloris Iburreri or Passionaria, as she was popularly and affectionately called by her people.

Municipal life in such cities as Barcelona (the

only important city visited by the Indian leader) was found by Nehru to be quite up to the level of the most modernised of the European countries.

Other cities not visited by Nehru such as Madrid and Valencia carried on (even in wartime) a high level of municipal administration. Those like Cadiz and Malaga which had fallen in the rebel hands earlier, also, while under the Rebublicans, had a high standard of municipal administration. Of course now the clock has been put back by Franco, Suner and others, and lights have gone out all over Spain. Food situation, education, women's affairs, economic affairs, municipal life—in short all that goes by the name of modern civilisation—ushered in by the republican regime—has gone down crashing since the days of the rebel regime. If Nehru were to visit Spain today, of course he would not find a vestige of that bright life, which so much attracted him in the years of the civil war.

And yet if he had gone a little earlier, he might have seen much more in Spain than what he saw. A good deal of demolition of civilisation had already been carried out by the vandals of General Franco. What the block-busters of Franco could not destroy, and indeed would never be able to destroy was the indomitable spirit of freedom in Spain. The Spaniard loves freedom with the same love which inspired the ancient Greeks and the Romans, and their descendants, the last century Greeks who fought against the barbarous Turks, and the present-

day Greeks of the Eam and the Elas who have defied the German hordes and are now struggling to maintain their freedom—and the Italians of Garibaldi and the present-day Italians who have rid their country of the fascist scourge. Such was the Spanish love for freedom, and such it remains today, though necessarily suppressed due to the gangster methods of Franco gang. This brings us to the crucial question—how far Nehru succeeded in establishing a united front with the Spanish people? Indeed how far? The united front (sponsored by Nehru) was as complete in case of Spain as one might wish it to be. He was as much successful here as in such countries like China, Czechoslovakia, Russia, etc. He met all the important people in Spain—Negrin and Cabellero, companies and the commanders of the international brigade. He rubbed shoulders with the Spanish Republican soldiers, the militia men and the trade unionists. They all enquired from him about India, just as he enquired from them about Spain. In this way greetings were exchanged, and feelings of warm affection between the two peoples established.

When the Republican flag once again flies proudly over Barcelona, Madrid and the other cities, these greetings of the two peoples could be renewed and then it would be possible to establish friendship between them on a better footing and this friendship would be continued to the advantage of other freedom-loving nations of the world.

So much about Nehru's activities in establish-

ing friendship between the Indian and the Spanish people. What about Tagore? Of course, he went only to France, and there heard about the progress of the Spanish Republic. He sympathised with it. He appreciated what it had done to raise the standard of living of the people, and he was especially pleased about its cultural progress. A good socialist and a democrat, he wished Spain well in its gallant srtuggle. He wanted the Indians to emulate the example of the Republican Spaniards in all respects. However since that Spanish regime has ceased to exist, it is useless to speculate on what it would have done to cement relations with India, and at the same time please Tagore.

However when the new Republican regime is formed in Spain, then it would be for that regime to take up the thread where the previous Republican administration left it, and to have still greater friendship with India.

Among the matters which would require its immediate attention, and which Tagore would like it to do foremost, is the establishment of cultural relationship with India, with exchange of cultural missions in the manner suggested in previous chapter. Spanish writers have become anti-fascists in a struggle which lasted for more or less eight years. They could be of great use in the cultural revival in India. The experience of the Indian writers in the struggle for freedom would be similarly of use to the Spaniards in their struggle at home for freedom, peace and security of work.

This brings us to the question of political

and economic relations between Spain and India. Tagore favoured it then, and he would have favoured it now too. There could not be any two opinions between him and Nehru in this matter. The two had identical views on Spain, they wanted cordial and friendly relations with it.

So far as those subjects were concerned about which they felt strongly—they could express themselves in like ways. Even in economic and political matters, they could speak in the same strain apart from the fact that Nehru, the Marxist, employed sometimes Marxist terminology in his such talks, while Tagore took the standpoint of humanitarian ideals.

Sometimes in cultural matters too, they could speak with equal experience about the subject. Spain was such a subject. They were both interested in its culture.

About Germany their views have been mentioned previously. They need not be dilated upon. The German nation had taken so many giddy right-about turns in the past twenty years that one does not know whether any expression of praise now for some of its achievements would not spoil it and encourage it to indulge in similar political acrobatics again. If Nehru and Tagore considered its cultural and scientific virtues to be remarkable, then surely it is high time that the Germans lived up to that ideal.

Then there would be much in Germany to interest at least one of the two leaders—Nehru. He can go and see the places, which Tagore would

have loved to see—the Westphalian countryside, Dortmund Ems Canal, Kiel Harbour, Krupp Works (building arms for international forces under international control), Leuna Chemical Works, Mannheim, Leipzig, Dresden, Frankfort-on-the-Order, Essen, and that pride of the Central European municipal administration —Hamburg.

Nehru's visit to England was a whirlwind political tour, in which political and economic programme dominated. Tagore's visit was not as much political as Nehru's, but patriot as he was, could he help advising England in matters of the British policy towards India? Of course not. The British needed this advice, and he gave it to them. Their rule in India was such as to require frank criticism on the part of Tagore. In literary matters, their programme differed. Tagore saw mostly literary personalities and Nehru those publishers and writers who were interested in political matters.

Itlay was another country which one of them, Nehru, would like to visit, now that Il Duce has been dealt with and the menace of fascism ended in that country. He could see many places of beauty there—those of which have not been damaged in the war. Tagore loved these sights in Rome, Venice, Florence and Turin, though he had not much time to see these places.

France pleased Nehru for its tidy municipalities, the smooth working of the *front-populair* in the early days and for its historical places like the famous prison of the last of the

Bourbons, the Arch of Triumph, the 'place of the revolution', etc. He also saw these historical places which are the relics of the church.

He did not see all of the country, but perhaps he would like to repeat his visit, and this time see all that there is worth seeing in that country.

About their Russian visits, we don't see much difference in outlook. They agreed about Russia's role in the modern world. They saw its industrialisation plans and industrial plants. They met scientists, *literati*, jurists, lawyers, authors and playwrights, novelists and poets. But they did not see the places which the 'Intourist' Moscow takes so great pain to advertise, such as Sebastopol, Yalta, Odessa, Rostov-on-Don, the giant electrical plants of Russia, and its power stations, the copper works at Irkutsk, the Lena and Yenesei gold-fields, the fine harbours of Kronstadt, Vladivo-stok and Novo Rossiysk, the Leningrad-Archangel Canal, Leningrad, etc.

They saw the Red Square, Kremlin, Lenin's Mausoleum and all places of note in Moscow.

When there is time and occasion for it Nehru would no doubt visit Russia again.

In all these countries, England, France, Russia, Germany and Italy (in the latter two countries before the fascist rule), these two men laid the foundations of lasting friendship with India. Now the superstructure could be raised and friendship could be increased. These were then their travels and such were the results of these travels.

VII

FAME IN OTHER COUNTRIES

The fame of Tagore and Nehru spread as a result of their travels, the internationalist touch which characterised their speeches, and several other factors. It was remarkable, considering the fact that their country was yet engrossed in deep problems which needed time for solution.

But their fame spread in foreign countries even earlier than in India. It might be suggested that since this spread of fame followed so close on their visit abroad, it might have been deliberately sought by them, and their (then) small group of friends engineered the plan to spread their fame and actually bolstered up their name through some papers, etc.

Facts belie this assumption. It is not possible—this plan. How many people achieve fame abroad, simply because of such deliberate plans? If that were true, then men like Feroze Khan Noon would be quite popular in foreign countries. As a matter of fact this man stayed abroad (intermittently) for over nine years. But he has not achieved any fame; try as he might, the press world shuns him unless of course it is a very formal talk which needs to be recorded. Similarly, the fame which Nehru and Tagore achieved was not according to premeditated plan. It just came to them. It

was years later that Tagore societies were formed in England, France, America and other countries. Even then the object was not to bolster up the name of Rabindranath Tagore, but to record an appreciation of his works and encourage the study of Tagore on the right lines.

Similarly, years later (though they knew him earlier) such men as Krishna Menon, Edward Thompson and A. J. Cummings (in Britain), Romain Rolland and Pertinax (in France) and Anup Singh and Pearl Buck (in America) made an organised effort to encourage a spirit of greater understanding of Nehru.

What the reader would say about the Congress committees in foreign countries. Did they too avoid from the very beginning any debunking of Nehru or Tagore? In some cases, the Congress committees were formed after Nehru and Tagore became famous. In others they already existed. They might have employed the names of Nehru and Tagore frequently. But obviously they could do that only in audiences where these names were understood.

But the same reader would say that in a democratic country it is not necessary for the audience to understand the personality of a man before they come to attend a meeting, where that personality is to be praised. Some people could be, in that way, made admirers of that personality. Of course that is possible. But surely then that personality must do something to deserve such popularity—something which the average man understands—for instance, he wants an appreciation of his struggle for

living and he expects his sympathisers and high personalities to find out a way which could end his bread problem. In this way the loyalty between him and the high personage is fostered. Also as the time passes the spirit of curiosity would force such people to read and understand the men they admire. Thus *ipso facto*, the admiration in which that personality is held is not the result of debunking propaganda. It is to a large measure due to the spirit of learning which animates most of us and which is indeed the basis of all scientific knowledge. It is therefore safe to assume that Nehru and Tagore's greatness was not bolstered up among the foreigners by the Congress committees. It was as much due to their efforts as to those of others (the general population of other countries) that their fame began to spread. Also we cannot assume that all men in foreign countries, who are interested in Tagore and Nehru and respect them as great men, do so out of altogether disinterested motives. Take the case of a publisher who, finding Nehru a man of world fame, publishes some book dealing with his life. He makes money out of it, just as he does out of his other publications, and he helps in spreading the fame of Nehru in the right perspective. Like those who consider Nehru a great man, he tries to create similar impression among the reading public. At heart he may or may not be a great admirer of the Indian Leader (this applies to Tagore too) but he is instrumental in spreading his fame.

Similar is the case of the newspaper or magazine editor who wants a name to blazon the headlines and sell the paper. Sometimes this gentleman is without much creative ability. Astute compiler that he is, he would publish a photograph of Nehru, some recent news about him, and a biographical sketch of his by some writer or other. He has covered the space, turned out the paper, made money, enjoyed editing the sketch, spread fame of Nehru and helped others to understand him.

He is the second type of those persons who make the Indian Leader popular, and his motives are not altogether disinterested.

Then there is the party campaigner (usually belonging to labour parties) who often in heat of campaign extols Indian Leaders to the skies to show his friendship with India and to get into the Parliament. He is not altogether a disinterested friend of Nehru. If his party or he himself continue to support Indian cause, then the use of Nehru's name by him is pardonable. He had his own ends to serve, but good ends. As for what he said in the heat of campaign, such things may help or hinder him, but among the audience the impression of greatness of Nehru grows, so that sometimes the publisher praises Nehru, ignoring to some extent his own interests.

However leaving aside the party politics and the vagaries of men under its influence, such men of this third type are often, when even not on party platform, among the most frank admirers of Nehru.

There is another type of person who by his foolhardy opposition to the Indian Leaders (Tagore and Nehru) tried to remove the good impression they made on public abroad. He did not want them to become popular, and yet he often found that his talks against them hit him back like a boomerang, and had just the opposite effect to what is desired by him. He is the Tory Party man or the India Office official who in season and out indulged in a vociferous campaign against them.

However though Nehru and Tagore's fame rests secure and has been built on firm foundations, it is as well to point out that these days other men, besides the members of the Tory Party and the India Office officials, could make an effort to malign the name of Nehru and Tagore. In fact, whenever some people, partly due to their ideal and partly due to profit motive, try to boost the name of some great man then other people out of similar motives try to minimise their popularity or even altogether end it.

This has happened in case of Stalin and Lenin; though so far as the latter leader is concerned, not much is heard about his opponents these days.

But it is unlikely to happen in case of Tagore or Nehru. They are not members of the communist party to arouse the ire of those who have been not at all pleased with Stalin (for reasons best known to them only). There might be some flutter in Tory dovecots, as there has been in the past. Out of spite Tories might

speak against or criticise the political writings of Tagore. But shrewd financiers as they are, they would not try their hand to make money out of this deal. This is not to say their campaign is right in one case while it is not so in the other. It is wrong in both cases. It does not foster united front between the two peoples on the issue of anti-fascism and peace of Europe. In case of India, it does not foster a feeling of friendship between India and Britain.

Even this factor though it might prove deterrent in case of Russo-British relations would not deter the Tory wire-pullers, whether at party headquarters, or on newspaper staffs, or in publishing firms, from having a go at Nehru or attempting a posthumous criticism of Tagore, were such a scheme economically feasible.

But it is not. And so the fame of two leaders rests secure in the outside world.

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